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PRINCE LUCIFER



PRINCE LUCIFER

BY

ALFRED AUSTIN

‘Lucifer, Son of the Morning.’

ISAIAH, CHAP. XIV. V. 12.

EVE. ‘Light-Bearer to my darkness!’

ACT IV. SCENE 5.

~~SECOND EDITION~~

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THE FIELD
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To The Queen's Most Excellent Majesty

MADAM,

On that memorable Midsummer Day, when You received the loving homage of Your faithful People, I had no lyric nor Jubilee ode to lay at Your feet; for the imagination is overwhelmed, rather than stimulated, by the retrospective contemplation of the half century of Your happy Rule. But who can forget that, in a special sense, this year is Yours? And therefore, since I have Your gracious permission, I humbly offer You this poor gift; hoping, if it should escape oblivion, that it may do so by being associated with Your touching virtues, and may be remembered along with worthier fruits of Your resplendent Reign.

I am, Madam,

Your Majesty's

Loyal, loving, and dutiful subject,

ALFRED AUSTIN.

PERSONAGES

PRINCE LUCIFER	. . .	<i>A Self-Exiled Sovereign.</i>
COUNT ABDIEL	. . .	{ <i>The Voluntary Companion of his Exile.</i>
FATHER GABRIEL	. . .	
ADAM	. . .	<i>A Gravedigger.</i>
EVE	. . .	<i>A Shepherdess.</i>
ELSPETH	. . .	<i>A Village Maiden.</i>

MALE AND FEMALE PEASANTS.

CHORUS—The Matterhorn, The Weisshorn, The Visp-Thal Torrent.

SCENE.

Castle Tourbillon	}	Both in a Mountain Valley near the Matterhorn.
The Village Church		

TIME—To-day.

ON THE END AND LIMITS OF OBJECTIVE POETRY

I HAVE long wished to say something, in the hearing of those whom the subject may happen to interest, on the misconceptions which, in an age so intent on controversy as our own, seem to me not infrequently to vitiate the most able comments on poetry that is strictly objective but at the same time not wholly devoid of ethical colouring and philosophic import; in a word, poetry which aims at representing the struggles, the pathos, and the tragedy, engendered by the active antagonism of rival Creeds, rather than seeks to adjudicate between them. The appearance of the Second Edition of *Prince Lucifer* provides me with the desired opportunity.

So long as a writer confines himself to descriptions of natural scenery or to the portrayal of what may be called the simple and elementary emotions, omitting from the scope of his treatment the mental, moral, and social forces that divide mankind, he is safe against misconception. He describes a scene, or tells a story; and the public are content to note that he has done these things well or ill. But if, haunted by the dark and solemn questions which, like a constant shadow, accompany the journey of the human race, his imagination arrests and embodies these in the personages of an epic or dramatic story; then, no matter how impersonally or objectively he may do so, people in these days at once begin to ask, "What does he mean? what does he believe? in the conflict in which we are all so deeply interested, and which he has elected to describe, to which side does he himself incline?" Should the poem furnish no answer to these inquiries, a certain sense of disappointment ensues. Moralists themselves, first and last of all things, they forget that, in verse at least, the poet is not a moralist, save accidentally and in a very

subordinate degree, but an artist ; and while, perhaps, lavish of praise concerning his imagination, his fancy, or his style, they reproach him with having engaged in a barren polemic, when, in truth, he has engaged in no polemic at all, but has rigidly confined himself to portraying the influence exercised by the divisions of the intellect and the perplexities of the conscience on the plastic creatures of his imagination.

Were it not unbecoming, I think I could show how this controversial spirit, this polemical temper of our time, has affected, for good or ill, the writings and reputation of some of my contemporaries who are eminent by their compositions in verse. But since I am precluded from adopting that course, I shall, perhaps, be pardoned if I fall back upon the only alternative method of illustration open to me, and indicate, with as much brevity and reserve as the case will permit, how the prevailing anxiety to establish some definite conclusion, theological or ethical, and the tacit assumption that everybody is burning with the same desire, has caused even the most competent critics to overlook, in my own compositions, what other-

wise, I think, they could scarcely have failed to observe.

Thirteen years ago I read, and found it so suggestive that I kept, a review which appeared in one of the most serious and able of our weekly organs of opinion. In it there occurred the following passage, which I will ask leave to quote, since it is of great assistance to me in my present purpose :—

“Mr. Austin’s serious poetry somewhat puzzles us. Not only is its workmanship good, but its general conceptions have something large and impressive in them ; yet when we come to examine the execution in detail, the intellectual element in his general conceptions is not worked out, and we find the poems, when finished, to be defective precisely in those points in which we had been led to admire the motive of the poems themselves. Thus, in *Madonna’s Child*, the general conception was certainly a fine one, namely, the tragedy in the utter divorce between the intellect of the day and its deepest and sweetest piety on the subject of religious faith. But the poem hardly illustrated its own subject at all. It gave us, instead, a very pretty picture of a devotee, who took all her religion on trust, and of a youth who, while detesting the narrow and selfish spirit which commercial ideas seem to introduce into modern

life, and longing for a faith which might at once subdue his intellect and task his devotedness, could passionately love all that was lovable in the fair devotee, without finding any rational pretence for sharing her faith. But of his moral or intellectual difficulties in the way of believing either the Roman Catholic or any other religion,—of the points on which his mind was attracted by her faith, barring the one obvious point of the feminine beauty of character it produced, and the points on which he held out against it,—of the grounds, in fact, of the tragic issue of the story, we hardly get a glimpse, so that while we feel the tragedy, we feel that the motive of it is kept quite in the dark. Where we expected a poem on one of the deepest of the moral perplexities of the age, we find only a sad tale, into which that moral perplexity enters as a cause, but not as a constituent thread of the literary subject.¹

It will scarcely be supposed that, after an interval of thirteen years, self-love can have anything to do with my dissent from the critical canon that underlies this passage. If there be one proposition concerning the scope of poetry which will, I think, on due reflection, be found indisputable, it is that, even if it be well and wise for a poet to describe “the moral or

¹ The *Spectator*, March 14, 1874.

intellectual difficulties in the way of believing the Roman Catholic or any other religion," which I very much doubt, a poet who attempts to do this, in a narrative poem, must inevitably suffer shipwreck, through going to sea in a vessel not fitted to carry such a cargo. I do not affirm that a poem, and a most beautiful poem, may not be written on the deepest moral perplexities, and a poem in which moral perplexity is the constituent thread and staple.

But such a poem will be purely reflective. To complain that an epic or dramatic poem uses moral perplexity mainly as an agent and a cause, is to condemn as a fault what, I submit, is essentially a merit, and to ask for the combination of two things that can by no possibility be united. Which of the two one prefers, whether one would rather read a reflective and semi-argumentative poem on moral perplexities, or a poem which exhibits the influence of these perplexities on the lives of men and women and the fortunes of mankind, is a matter of personal taste; and I have little doubt that, in the present age, the preference of most persons is for the former. But surely there

can be no doubt as to which is the better art, which is more consonant with the highest aim and loftiest purpose of poetry.

The same radical misconception as to the true end and proper limits of Objective Poetry, as I understand them, was shown in some of the most appreciative comments on *The Human Tragedy*, of which *Madonna's Child* is only a portion ; and now, once again, I note the same phenomenon in the somewhat embarrassed attitude of many who have publicly commented on *Prince Lucifer*. Once more I read of the "not very positive teaching of this curious poem," and the avowal that "we admire the poetry very much more than we admire the moral and spiritual drift." Now whether or not any positive teaching can be extracted from *Prince Lucifer*, no moral nor spiritual drift was intended by the author, in the sense in which those words are used in the sentence cited. That moral and spiritual perplexities enter into it, and enter largely, is, no doubt, true ; and they are the perplexities not of this age alone, but of all ages, in a word the permanent perplexities of mankind. But they enter —

into it as forces, and, so to speak, demons of the drama, acting on and through its human personages. Thus they are exhibited not in controversial but in practical conflict; and it perforce follows that, from that conflict, it is not a controversial but a practical conclusion that ensues.

Accordingly, *Prince Lucifer*, it seems to me, has a very definite dramatic conclusion, in the practical collapse of the Prince's theories when confronted with the Nature of Things and the immutable character of the human heart. Prince Lucifer believes himself to be a Light-Bearer. So does Father Gabriel. So, for that matter, does Count Abdiel. But, in sooth, who does not? If I were asked to say in prose whether I thought Prince Lucifer or Father Gabriel to be the true Light-Bearer, I might, perhaps, endeavour to reply to the best of my own poor light. But far from feeling tempted to entertain that question in the poem itself, I was absolutely precluded by my art from doing so. Human beings who recognise theological sanctions and the intrinsic sanctity of marriage, are, in *Prince Lucifer*, brought into contact and conflict with human

beings who do not ; and they work out their respective destinies dramatically, in other words according to the laws of human nature as observed by experience. Briefly, *Prince Lucifer* is an imaginative representation, by a particular instance, of certain universal, indisputable, and immutable facts.

Are then the readers of *Prince Lucifer* to conclude that, because it is strictly an objective poem, and because it seeks to solve no moral problem and to settle no spiritual controversy, therefore it is merely a story in dramatic and lyrical verse, and bears within it no portion of the burden of the solemn and insoluble mystery that is the silent companion of all lofty and lonely souls? I should indeed be doing a grievous wrong both to my own constant contemplations, and to the high seriousness which, if I may say so, alike impels and controls whatever energy of imagination inspires my more presumptuous adventures in the domain of verse, if I did not admit, with a frankness that I trust has in it no sin of arrogance, that in conceiving *Prince Lucifer* I hoped to have conceived a philosophic poem of no mean kind, how-

ever inferior in degree it might finally prove through feebleness of execution. If I am asked what is the inner spirit of the work that could ever encourage its parent to claim for it this high distinction, I am forced to reply that I should be at a loss, even if I could subdue my repugnance, to expose in the crude and coarse garment of prose what came to me, and I have offered to others, in the ethereal texture of verse. But since the question has been propounded, perhaps the nearest approach to a definite reply will be found in the following extract from a private letter, which I trust I shall be pardoned for producing here, since it illustrates, better than anything else I could say, what I conceive to be the true scope, the essential purpose, and the proper limits, of Objective Poetry, when dealing with philosophic themes :—

“ I have read the notices of *Prince Lucifer* to which you have called my attention, and have received many private communications concerning it ; and I find, as I expected, that though the writers express themselves very generously as to the literary qualities of the work, they one and all, unless exception be made of a very penetrating paper in the *Saturday Review*, and of a letter

exhibiting surprising insight from Professor Dowden, are somewhat puzzled as to its meaning. Their very failure to perceive that the choice of the names *Lucifer*, *Eve*, *Abdiel*, *Gabriel*, was neither arbitrary nor fantastic, but is a key at every one's disposal for the unlocking of the poem, shows that, notwithstanding the sympathetic manner in which they have written of it, they still stand outside its inner signification. The reason of this I believe to be that they have looked for something which is not there, and hence overlook something which they would otherwise discern. They expected the author to arbitrate between Agnosticism and Revealed Religion, between Free Love and Marriage, since these figure so prominently in the poem, and he has not done so. The story apparently has interested them; but perceiving there is something more in it than a mere story, yet not discerning what that something is, they not unnaturally regard it as surplusage and are disposed to rebuke the author for introducing it. As the easiest solution of the matter, they conclude he had no intention, after all, save to narrate a story in verse. Some, indeed, falling back upon the oldest expedient of perplexed criticism, have laboured to solve the riddle, by seeking for a likeness to *Prince Lucifer* in previous poems, with or without a philosophic import; but, finding the likeness to be dim and distant indeed, they give up the search with the good-natured remark that, in all probability, the

author's imagination has been disporting itself for its own amusement, and that *Prince Lucifer* is a poetical fantasy.

“You know how wrong and beside the mark this conclusion is, and that, over and beyond a love-story in poetic garb and dramatic form, there is exhibited the endless conflict between Pagan ideals and Christian practice, between Positivism and Theology, between unfettered romantic Love and the Marriage bond, in the persons of Prince Lucifer, Eve, Elspeth, Count Abdiel, and Father Gabriel; a conflict not of to-day more than of yesterday or of to-morrow, though in the present age, as in certain previous ones, the conflict is waged with unusual keenness. In that conflict Prince Lucifer is practically worsted. He not only forfeits his throne, but is compelled to acknowledge, in action, that his theories are such stuff as dreams are made of. Surrender them he does not, but he ceases to press them. When Eve says to him—

. I have awoke your dream,
The dream that was to you reality,
And you have nothing now but my poor love,
Which seems so little, severed from your dream;

what is Lucifer's reply?

. Pray, pray on,
And on love's neutral territory, dear,
Let conflict be suspended.

“Thus, advancing beyond the solution offered in *The Human Tragedy*, where Godfrid and Olympia are united only in death, *Prince Lucifer* seems to carry one step farther the practical aid poetry has so often lent to moral and spiritual perplexity. Nor do I doubt that you have perceived it was the intention of the author to leave his readers to infer that the Kingdom converted to Lucifer’s theories at the very moment Eve finds them crumbling beneath her, would infallibly end by repeating her experience, and reverting to its pristine beliefs; and, furthermore, that when the hope of redress in another life for the inequalities and hardships of this perishes in the heart of the multitude, humility and patience, those crowning virtues of the simple, infallibly become extinct. Not to discern this fact is to be insensible to the most imminent menace of our age, and not to have cast the horoscope of the yet more terrible time that is coming.

“Such, it seems to me, if somewhat crudely stated, as must perforce be the case when stated in prose, is the central meaning of the poem, whose title and the name of whose characters are an essential and integral part of its design. Indeed, would it be extravagant to find in *Prince Lucifer* intermittent gleams and reflections, as it were, of the first Lucifer and the first Eve known to human story, and of every Eve and every Lucifer that have lived since, down to the great Lucifer.

of our own time, his devotees and victims, whether we call this latest Light-Bearer the French Revolution, the Spirit of the Age, Positivism, the Principle of Progress, or the Future? Verily, he is as old as Adam, and as enduring as our hope of recovering the Eden we are said to have lost. All I have done is to present him and his influence on our affairs in a new aspect. I have portrayed him, as he was in the Beginning, as a Son of the Morning. But, though he is 'cut down to the ground,' he is not 'brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.'¹ To the last he remains—and Eve, by whom he is cut down to the ground, begs him always to remain—an Idealist. Would that all our Light-Bearers would do the same, and conclude, as he does:—

. 'Tis well
 To see all things in heavenly fantasy ;
 Ourselves, and others, even as we scan
 The unattainable bright stars, and deem
 Their silence music ; *so that nothing gross*
Can reach the elevation of our thoughts,
Wherein we dwell transfigured.

“That seems to me to be light we none of us need reject.”

To these words, I would add only this: that the author was not so unreasonable as to expect that the

¹ Isaiah, chap. xiv.

most painstaking critic or the most sympathetic reader would fully apprehend, after one or two cursory perusals, that with which he himself even yet is but imperfectly familiar, after long, close, and parental intimacy. For just as the offspring of our loins frequently develope, in their maturity, qualities we neither projected nor foresaw, so the children of the brain sometimes grow to significance transcending the original conception of their parent ; and the writer of *Prince Lucifer* has perceived in it, since it was written, many things which he humbly hopes that others will, in due time, come to discern.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

SWINFORD OLD MANOR,
December 1, 1887.

ACT I

SCENE I

[A winding path among the Mountains, up which PRINCE LUCIFER is walking, alone. ADAM comes down the path, and meets PRINCE LUCIFER.]

LUCIFER.

Where leads this road?

ADAM.

Good sir, it leads to death,
As all roads do.

LUCIFER.

True, yokel, that it does ;
But where meanwhile ?

ADAM.

Mayhap to marriage, sir ;
For marriage is the half-way-house to death,
Where heedless men make merry.

LUCIFER.

Hardly there !

Save one be minded, in a moonish freak,
To dally with the coy and nimble wind,
Kiss the cold glacier, court the unmelting snow,
Fondle the scaly body of the pine,
Woo the escaping cataract, embrace
The monstrous avalanche, what business here
Hath the warm insurrection of the blood,
Or quest of pillowed softness? Stair on stair
Of rugged steepness winding to the tower
Of spacious observation I behold,
But nowhere ledge or narrow shelf for love
To stretch its velvet body and prolong
Its languid gambols. Place alone is here
For austere thews, and boundings of the mind
Across the chasms of appalling thought,
Up to the crags of rimless speculation.
Love clings unto the valley, as beseems
Its pampered homeliness. The mind delights
To commerce with the icy-sharpened peak,
And controvert the lightning.

ADAM.

He is lost

In the void altitude of his own thoughts,
And recks me not. These lofty natures live
Cold as the cradle of the lawine is,
And in destruction but impart themselves.
'Tis ill to be too near. I'll scramble down.

LUCIFER.

What was it said you? Marriage! Look you, man!
In gorge and precipice life oft hath found
Death,—true; not love.

ADAM.

Perchance you will find both.
Each is far-reaching. I will leave you, sir.

LUCIFER.

So soon! You speak too sagely for your garb.
What do you in this planet?

ADAM.

Do its work,
As all men do, but I especially.
I have an interest in all men's lives,
Doing for those no richer than myself
What for myself I cannot do.

LUCIFER.

And that?

ADAM.

A simple trade ; the oldest in the world.
I dig men's graves. I shall not dig my own.

LUCIFER.

Like you that trade?

ADAM.

It likes me well enough.

I have no dread of that which all men dread,
Being so familiar with it. There they dwell,
Hamlet of houses clustering round a spire
Girt at its base with heavings of the ground.
Men are like moles, sir ; when they go below,
They do disturb the earth ; though whether they
Come up for air sometimes when no one looks,
What man shall say? Ghosts, spectres, mirages,
Haply are thus conceived.

LUCIFER.

Hast seen them ever?

ADAM.

See we aught else? It is a spectral world,
Wherein vague men walk ghostlike. Death is real,
And all beside mere show; and so meseems
In me is more reality since I
Shoulder his weapon.

LUCIFER.

'Tis a churlish lord,
To treat his serf no better than a stranger.
You serve death faithfully; he serves you ill.
Life is a service sweet and profitable,
Were life but long enough for men to learn it,
Or wisdom more precocious.

ADAM.

Life is too long:
But, long or short, foolish or wise, this death
Casts its still shadow half athwart our lives——

LUCIFER.

—Lending them grace and quietness. The glare
Of deathless life would be intolerable.
Where learned you to be pensive?

ADAM.

By the grave.

There, one learns all. Within the narrow bound
Of church and churchyard, whatso lore commands
Your approbation, sir, I have acquired.

I toll the bell for burial, marriage, mass.

The self-same clapper and the same worn rope
Serve for all three. Time's the sole difference ;

Whose artificial measures, which I hold

Within the horny hollow of my palm,

Mislead imagination, but not mine.

Birth, wedding, dissolution, are but stops

In the one tune whose cadence still is death.

LUCIFER.

And when that music ends, what follows then ?

ADAM.

A sweeter music surely, ending not.

Earth shuts, Heaven opens.

LUCIFER.

And who tells you that ?

ADAM.

My own desires, and Father Gabriel.

LUCIFER.

And is that proof and warranty enough ?

ADAM.

Proof is not needed where there dwells no doubt.
You do not doubt it, sir ?

LUCIFER.

I doubt all things.

But you had best believe them. See ! there's more
[Giving him money.]

Than Heaven, I warrant, will ever do for you.

ADAM.

How know you but that Heaven hath lured you here
To dole me this ? Deeds are God's servitors,
Or willing or reluctant. Keep my thanks !
I must descend and dig another grave.
May-be, some day, sir, I shall scoop out yours.
It shall be neat and shapely as the sheets
Smoothed by an anxious housewife.

[ADAM descends the mountain.]

LUCIFER.

Fare-you-well.

Strange that this man should moralise on life,
And find no riddle in the afterward !
The riddle's in the question : ask it not,
And life, and death, and Heaven, seem plain enough.
We vex ourselves with interrogatories,
To which no answer comes. He asketh none,
And so lives answered. Till we doubt we know,
Or think we know ; and what we think depends
On our complacency. Thus, thus, by him,
The janitor of death, 'tis not conceived
The door he helps to open may but lead
Into an empty chamber, dark and dumb.
Meanwhile, how bright and eloquent is life,
Here where the tide of human voices ebbs
Into a sea of silence ! What a scene !
The cataracts never looking where they leap,
And, as they fall, bounding away again
From ledge to ledge in careless confidence ;
The gloomy glory of the sunlit pines,
That climb up to the verge of desolation,
Finding a foothold where the chamois fails ;
The passionless bosom of the barren snow ;

And here, midway betwixt the vacant throne
Of sheer sublimity and yon low vale
Of human needs and passions, butterflies,
The wingèd flowers of the unsown air,
Flickering o'er crag and precipice as though
They revelled in the safety mortals find
A dizzying terror. Each slow upward stride
Bruises the secret sweetness of the thyme.
Hark! though I see them not, in pastures near
Feed flocks and herds on grasses newly green,
Carrying their music with them as they graze,
Melodious banquet. I will follow it.

[He ascends.]

THE WEISSHORN.

*Dewdrop, and snowdrop,
And harebell of the heather,
Out with your flock
In the open weather ;

With the melted snow
Are the torrents laden ;
Melt not, O melt not,
Mountain maiden !*

LUCIFER.

Lo! there they wander, on the high smooth slopes,
The many-tinkling kine; and lower down,
Among the rocks and boulders, scrambling ewes
Teased by their suckling lambs. Hark! what was that?

A VOICE.

Help! Help! This way!

LUCIFER.

I come. Now shout again.

VOICE.

Help! Help!

LUCIFER.

Good! Help is coming. Do not fear.

VOICE.

Here! Here! This way!

LUCIFER.

I see you, little waif,
Blown 'mong the boulders. But how came she there?
Wait, and I come.

EVE.

Don't leap, sir! 'Tis too sheer.

[He splits, without severing, the limb of a stout sapling, that grows on the edge of the rock, and so swings himself down.]

EVE.

Oh!

LUCIFER.

Green sap is stronger than the serest rope.
How true it holds! and, dangling in the air,
Lends a way back again. But, little maiden,
What strange freak led you to this lower ground,
Lacking an exit?

EVE.

'Twas this lamb that strayed.

LUCIFER.

And you, another lamb, strayed after it.

EVE.

I thought there was some goatherd in the hills
Would hear me call. I did not know who answered,
Or I would patiently have waited till
There dawned some humbler help.

LUCIFER.

How know you me?

EVE.

I know you not ; but your smooth aspect tells
You are not native to these rugged parts.
Are you Prince Lucifer ?

LUCIFER.

A simple guess.

Why do you shrink from me ?

EVE.

I did not shrink,
But haply thought that, gazing round, I might
Discover some escape fear overlooked.

LUCIFER.

Look now with eyes of fearlessness, but still
No exit offers. How you hither came
Baffles my observation.

EVE.

Why, 'twas thus.
I clambered down the jutting ledges stepped

By this stray yeanling. Its light weight they bore,
But crumbled under mine ; and when I thought
To reascend them, they proved false frail stairs,
Leaving me here. And then—and then—I called.
Forgive me ! for my danger now is yours.

LUCIFER.

Danger, when shared, seems safety. This green limb
Will be our rescue.

[As he leaps up and pulls it down, it snaps at the fork.]

Rotten as the rock !

I never had believed your rowan boughs
Were so untrusty. Backward way is none.
Let us go lower.

EVE.

Have a care. The fall
Is deadlier still than this.

LUCIFER.

Once dropped below,
We are in touch with other ground, while here
An isolated terrace holds us fast.
Daring alone will help us. If I leap,

Have you the nerve to drop into my clutch?
It is our only safety.

EVE.

I will do
What you enjoin. But if it be your death!

LUCIFER.

Death is a coward : we will frighten him,
By showing him no fear. The ground looks soft.

EVE.

Nay, do not leap till I have said a prayer.
Wait till I cross myself.

LUCIFER.

Best close your eyes,
And hold your breath. See! I have touched the bottom
As sound as at the top. 'Tis simple now.
Further this way. The face slopes inward here,
And you will slip unhindered to my arms.

EVE.

But the poor lamb? I cannot leave it here.

LUCIFER.

Drop it, and I will catch it by the fleece
Before it touch the ground.

[She throws him the lamb.]

LUCIFER.

Scared more than hurt.
There ! bleat in peace. Now, little shepherdess,
There's none to drop you ; you must drop yourself,
While I against this bulging rock will lean
And safely wait your coming. Yes, like that.

[She lets herself drop.]

LUCIFER.

Windfall of mountain gossamer ! the lamb
Was almost weightier.

EVE.

Not the brawniest youth
In all our valley would have done this thing,
And done it safely. O, how strong you are !

LUCIFER.

'Twas but your woman's heart that magnified
Apparent peril. That, at least, is past.

But the ascent is stern and difficult.

'Tis well for both, your lungs breathe mountain air,
Your limbs climb mountain pathways.

EVE.

My eyes swim,
And my knees totter. Past that precipice
I dare not venture.

LUCIFER.

Then look up, not down.
Give me your hand. See! I am steadfast, gazing
Into the abyss.

EVE.

Men love to play with peril.
Nay, let us back!

LUCIFER.

There is no safety backward.
Carry the lamb, and I will carry you ;
[He puts the lamb in her arms, and lifts her from the ground.]
A mountain load of double innocence.
Why, I could run with you along the rim
Of gaping gorges. I feel lighter thus,
Than carrying the sole burden of myself.

You give my spirit freshness, and my feet
The nimbleness of youth. Bleat, little lamb,
We take you to your mother.

EVE.

Oh! not there!

[She faints, and her head falls on his shoulder.]

LUCIFER.

My mountain flower is drowsy on its stalk.
There's dew for its sweet petals.

[He kisses her on the mouth, and lays her on the ground.]

THE VISP-THAL TORRENT.

*When the snow lies deep on the gable,
When the kine are warm in the stable,
When the sluices are clogged with lumber,
Then the flowers of the forest slumber.*

*When the eaves of the thatch are dripping,
When the kids and the lambs are skipping,
When the fringe of the larch is shaken,
Then the flowers of the forest waken.*

*When the flail of the thresher is lifted,
When the apples are gathered and sifted,
When the leaves are whirled hither and thither,
Then the flowers of the forest wither.*

LUCIFER.

Alone, I had not done it. This fair load
Was ballast to my venture. Where is the rose
That made a garden of her cheek, and where
The ripe and ruddy orchard of her lips?
The snowpeaks are not paler. Rest you there,
Till I baptize you freshly from the brook.

[He goes to a brook hard-by.]

THE MATTERHORN.

*Why doth He come from afar? Now the marl and
the granite are Sundered,
There is rest in the heart of the hills where the earth-
quake tormented and thundered.
When the avalanche fury is spent, there is peace after
roaring and rending ;
But the passions of Man persevere, and the tumult of
Man is unending.*

*The doe is at fault for her fawn ; there is joy in the
nest of the eagle :*

*The partridge is out with her brood, where the wildcat
and ferret inveigle :*

*The windhover wheels in the sky, but the morsels of
daintiness tarry :*

*When the couch of the Mighty is empty, Fate prowls
till it findeth the quarry.*

LUCIFER (*bending over her*).

Nor death, nor sleep. What is't that mimics both?
There is no contradiction in this face ;
Its look is all assent. How fair were death,
Could it be forced to stay ! But, of all guests,
It is the briefest visitant, and life
Already maketh haste to push it out,
And set up fresh antagonisms.

EVE (*awaking*).

Where,

Where is the lamb?

LUCIFER.

There, nibbling at the thyme.

EVE.

Where am I? I—I do remember now.
Are we both safe?

LUCIFER.

Safe as the dome of Heaven.

EVE.

I thought that I was falling through the air,
Falling, still falling, and my flock fell too,
Baaing and bleating ; and the cataracts roared
Louder than even roar they in the night,
When darkness seems to lend them ampler voice.
The mountains melted into mist ; the clefts,
And gorges, and ravines, made way for us ;
Until my lambs were graves, and I was kneeling
In my accustomed place within the church,
Where we all worship. But no acolyte came ;
The candles stood unlighted, and no flowers
Freshened the altar. Then I sought the door,
And as I dipped my finger in the stoup,
And touched my lips with holy-water, woke.

LUCIFER.

Dreams are the vapours of the soul, and have

In waking their foundation, foul or fair.
Innocent days radiate innocent dreams,
And yours are lamblike.

EVE.

But my lips are wet.

LUCIFER.

'Twas water from the brook ; 'tis holy now.
Perchance it woke you, and your dream was true.
What are the mountains, inly viewed, but mist
And melting mirages? And when we fall
From heights of our conception, all things yield
Until we reach the graveyard.

EVE.

Hence the track
Back to my flock meandering mounts and dips.
I know it well.

LUCIFER.

Then show it me.

EVE.

This way.

It passes by your castle.

LUCIFER.

Go you first.

But you are faint. Rest yet a little while.

EVE.

No need. That foolish giddiness hath gone.

LUCIFER.

What do you in this solitude all day long?

EVE.

So many things. With which shall I begin?

I knit, I sing, I pray; I count the lambs.

I watch the clouds, I listen to the torrents.

I see the heavy velvet-coated bees,

Their wage within their pouch, go staggering home,

Drunk with the new must of the eglantine.

I gather saxifrage and spread it out

Smooth on my lap, then put it back again,

Lest it should die. I chant the litany,

And wonder at the whiteness of the snow

Upon the Weisshorn. Sometimes comes a sound

Deeper than thunder, less articulate,

And distant farther. Then I cross myself.

It is the avalanche, and far-off vales
Are silenced by its tumult.

LUCIFER.

Have you books?

EVE.

Yes. When the flock is couched and will not stray,
I read the lives of saints and confessors,
Martyrs and virgins, Father Gabriel
Keeps in the sacristy and lends to me.
But any living sound from that dead page
Makes me a truant, and the vaguest cloud
Says more to me than these true histories.

LUCIFER.

When Nature speaks, child, mortals should be dumb.
Keep eyes and ears for her ; 'tis she instructs
In all worth learning.

[To himself.] Strange this mountain babe,
This suckling of the hills, this wilding flower,
Should apprehend unconsciously a truth
The lettered mostly miss. How fair she is !
Simple and sweet as honeysuckled lane,
Leading we know not whither.

EVE.

There it is !

LUCIFER.

The Castle. Never was there trustier guide,
Your payment must be hospitality.
Were you within it ever ?

EVE.

You forget.

Within it, yes, when there was no within.
For all was roofless till you came. It stood
Rock 'mid the rocks, a hill among the hills,
Quarried no more than is the Matterhorn.
Now all seems built and shapely.

LUCIFER.

You shall see.

[They enter the Courtyard.]

SCENE II

[Castle Tourbillon.]

COUNT ABDIEL.

Dispatches, Prince, from your late kingdom, lie,
Awaiting your good will.

LUCIFER.

Attend this maiden,
And show her what is now my only Realm.
This is Count Abdiel, who my exile shares,
Albeit he frowns upon the fantasies
That make my life a willing banishment.
I will rejoin you shortly.

ABDIEL.

A fair flower,
Culled on the mountain side ; a shepherdess,
Carrying her own credentials. Let the lamb
Bleat at our heels.

EVE.

It can remain without.

ABDIEL.

Nay, let it follow ; all things enter here.
Nor moat nor drawbridge nor portcullis fence
This Castle from the common air ; 'tis free
To foot of man or beast. Withal, none come.
Brighten the Castle with your presence ; yours

Is the first voice its walls have listened to,
Save those who dwell within them.

EVE.

O, how grand !

ABDIEL.

There is no grandeur here : Prince Lucifer
Loves but the simple and the primitive.
Why should a man whose fancy hath forsworn
The pomp and palaces of birth, annex
The tricks of splendour to his solitude ?
The purple of the mountains robes his mind ;
He's a philosopher.

EVE.

And what is that ?

ABDIEL.

A houseless stranger in a well-roofed world,
A whimsical refuser of man's needs,
A system-seeker in a round of chance,
A palimpsest of wisdom,—O so wise,
That all our wants are folly, all our passions
Mere matter for conclusions. To despise
What others cherish,—that's philosophy.

EVE.

I do not understand.

ABDIEL.

No more do I.

Philosophers were not philosophers,
If common wisdom apprehended them.
Withal, he has this virtue: Though his brain,
As doth become its loftiness, abides
Within the curling fleeces of the mist,
The meetest maiden on the mountain side,
Yourself, or any sister of your choice,
Hath not a simpler heart.

EVE.

Then he is good.

I felt he was. He has a gentle voice.

ABDIEL.

Is gentleness then goodness? Instruments
Are good or bad according as they do
The work they were conceived for. Gentleness—
Well, heed me not. To fling a Realm away,
Because you have a maggot in your skull,
Is goodness topsy-turvy.

EVE.

But what Realm
Has he relinquished? Is it great, and rich?

ABDIEL.

The greatest in the world ; a Realm whose roots
Grip the round globe, and draw their sustenance
From intervening continents : a Throne
Propped by the feet of couchèd centuries ;
Older than oldest oaks, old as the sea,
And once as changeless. Faith, authority,
Reversions from the Past, invested awe,
Which none can squander, were its revenue.
And last, the crown of these, humility,
That wisdom of the heart, which reconciles
Life's contradictions with content, confirmed
His people in perpetual loyalty.

EVE.

Did they rebel?

ABDIEL.

If precedent rebel
'Gainst innovation, then they rebels were.
But if to take experience by the beard

And gird at its gray wisdom justify
The brand of insurrection, it was he,
Not they, that was the rebel. But I point
A joke too gravely. 'Tis a humorous world :
Not here among the mountains ; they are grim,
And understand not laughter ; Nature has
No sense of humour ;—but where man abides,
O then grotesqueness balances chagrin,
And keeps life even.

EVE.

When you laugh, I hate you.
You speak to me in riddles, but I see
You love him not.

ABDIEL.

Not love him ! Wherefore then
Share I his exile ? Had I loved him less,
I might have worn his Crown, that empty waits
But for the head to fit it. What is love,
But faithful pity, tender tolerance
For every foible and fatuity ?
Yet love 's the sheerest folly of them all,
And you must let me laugh that fool away,
Or I should find his sighs unbearable.

EVE.

Perplex me not. I am a simple maiden.

ABDIEL.

Nothing so dangerous as simplicity.
Know all, fear nothing.

EVE.

Father Gabriel

Speaks from another text. But tell me plain,
Is it for conscience' sake Prince Lucifer
Leaves the Throne vacant? Did he give up much?

ABDIEL.

Yes, he relinquished all that men desire,
The pinnacles of pomp, the purple couch,
The craning of the neck, the bended knee,
And sinuous train of eager servitors.
Life was for him a well-stocked market-place,
Where he could buy all stuffs of happiness
Cheap for a smile. Wealth pressed its goods upon him,
And beauty from its winsome wares removed
The veil of prohibition, and exclaimed,
Behold and take! All these he forfeited,

To have a windy Castle on a hill,
Below the snow-line.

EVE.

Now you sneer again.
And yet the tale sounds noble.

ABDIEL.

Books, books, books.
Books and bare walls are all I have to show.
'Tis less a Castle than a library.

EVE.

Where is the Chapel?

ABDIEL.

On the snowy peaks,
In the long aisles of interlacing pines,
The dim religious light of hushed ravines,
And overhanging dome of spangled Heaven.
We are philosophers ; we do not kneel
At carven altars in our orisons.
Our holy-water is the morning dew,

Welled in the stoups of purple crocuses,
Our lamps the meteors of the dreaming night,
And silent darkness is our sanctuary.
The musk-rose is our thurible, and fumes
Invisible of incense float around
The shrine of our devotion. Every throat
In bush or glade, ether or lonely moor,
Enlisted is our chorister, and sings
Matins at dawn, vespers and lauds at eve,
And benediction always. When we need
The organ's diapason, then the stops
Of whirlwind and of thunder surge and roll
With awful usurpation of the soul,
That crouching trembles. This our ritual ;
And with this floating immaterial creed
So skilfully we fish, we mean to hook
The gross and greedy gullets of mankind.
How like you our Evangel ?

EVE.

Earth and air,
I have been taught, are but God's tabernacle.
Therefore you worship freely nor amiss.

ABDIEL.

Or if that airy Gospel leave you lean,
We have another, warranted to drive
The soul in blinkers, that it may not heed
What it descries but dimly, but trot straight,
It knows not whither, with its load of life,
Fate flourishing the whip. A solid Creed,
Whose priests force matter to confessional,
And make it own what secret pranks it plays
With its confederate, force. Laws, sequences,
Inductions, formulas that never fail,—
This side the grave,—are mass and breviary
For its stern devotees. Who want to know
More of the stars than what their distances,
The pace they travel and the path they keep,
Are curious fools and witless heretics.

EVE.

Why do you mock me?

ABDIEL.

You I did not mock,
But truth is mockery, faithfully discharged ;
And if your feelings lie across its track,

Why, then it wounds you. This, our other Creed,
Converts you not? And yet—and yet—the world
Is walked by men who hug it to their hearts,
And deem it sacramental.

[EVE, perceiving an image of the Madonna, with an unlit
lamp hanging before it, falls on her knees.]

EVE.

Mother mine!

[She prays in silence. PRINCE LUCIFER re-enters, and gazes
at her, till she rises.]

EVE.

Why hangs the lamp unlit before Her face,
Face that should never unillumined be,
Or day or night?

LUCIFER.

Kindle the lamp and come,
Come night or day, to see that still it burns,
The pledge of your return.

[He lights a taper and gives it to her, and she lights the lamp.]

LUCIFER.

I will attend you
Back to your flock.

EVE.

No, thitherward, alone
Let me descend. But if no altar here
Provides you worship, will you not repair
Down to our lowly chapel in the vale,
Where Father Gabriel ministers ?

LUCIFER.

Where you pray,
There will I come. God wend you !

[EVE descends the mountain alone.]

THE VISP-THAL TORRENT.

*Not alone, not alone, little maiden, your heart down
the mountain is going.*

*The edelweiss watches your feet, and the runnels are
foaming and flowing.*

*The sentinel summits look down, and the stars that
you see not attend you ;*

*And the pine-forests listen and brood, and rejoice in
the fragrance they lend you.*

*Not alone, not alone, little maiden, or upward or
downward you ramble :*

*There is dew in the cup of the cistus, the blossoms are
pink on the bramble.*

*The clouds, as they sail in the sky, spread a billowy
carpet below you,*

*And the motionless mountains afar with their long
shadows follow and know you.*

SCENE III

ABDIEL.

For a word,

As easy uttered as a prayer, a song,
A jibe, a sigh, a laugh, an anything,
To disinherit and dethrone oneself,
Why, what is that but lofty lunacy?

LUCIFER.

What word?

ABDIEL.

What word but God?

LUCIFER.

Who uttered it?

ABDIEL.

Yourself.

LUCIFER.

When,—when?

ABDIEL.

This moment, when you sped
Yon dwindling wonder of the hills adown
Her flockward course. How pat the parting came,
“God wend you!”—pious, valedictory.

LUCIFER.

A courtly fiction.

ABDIEL.

All our words are fictions.
But my uncourtly philosophic Prince,
Save when a rustic petticoat is by,
Prefers the unpleasant to the pleasant ones.

LUCIFER.

An exclamation cozened from my tongue
By a surprising glimpse of what might serve
For Heaven, if Heaven were not so fanciful.
You catch men talking the old tongue sometimes
Long after they have entered the new country. 'Tis
The force of habit.

ABDIEL.

Habit is a force ;
Then why oppose it ?

LUCIFER.

What a winsome child !
She lent the mountains softness, and the rocks
Smiled like her gaze when it was shining on them.
The rampant torrents slackened as she stepped
Over their broken bridges, and the roar
Was changed to rippling treble when they heard
The soft mysterious minor of her voice.
Think you that she is safe ? If mischief should
Hinder her steps ! I should have gone with her.

ABDIEL.

Go now ; 'tis not too late. O princely dupe,
Whose heart's dew deluges his head with mist,
As little danger lurks for such a maid
Among such mountains, as the streams confront
Along the channels that belong to them.
But what of the Dispatches ?

LUCIFER.

True, she is

A native denizen of dangerous tracks.
And yet I saved her.

ABDIEL.

The Dispatches, Prince,
Are full of pleasant matter, and, meseems,
Open a gate for your return.

LUCIFER.

The lamb !
The little lamb ! I should have kept the lamb,
Memento of our hazard. O, it must
Have been the prettiest paradox to see
The fleecy truant nestling in her arms,
Its tender shepherdess upheld by mine,
Her hazel curls against my grizzled beard,
And the immutable mountains looking on,
With a contented smile.

ABDIEL.

Were you a king,
Some courtly artist would have painted it,
And worn a title. Now, it fades on air
With the reverberation of your voice.

LUCIFER.

A King? A king! A king without a crown!
A swordless, sceptreless, assenting thing,
An idol prayed to so it grants the prayer,
Painted and gewgawed! Do they think that I,
Since born to servitude, must live a slave?
A king may win his freedom, like another:
I have won mine, and will not forfeit it.
I think as freely as the lowliest churl
In my foregone dominions, nor would change
That liberty for kingship of the world.

ABDIEL.

Read the Dispatches; you will see they meet
Your thoughts half-way.

LUCIFER.

A via media,
The by-way of the feeble. Offered half,
And half refused, I leave and keep the whole,
Their folly and my wisdom. They consent
That Love shall have the birthright of his wings,
Nor longer, like a captive eagle, blink

Chained to a nuptial perch, so only Prayer
Remain the pensioned gaoler of the mind,
Going his constant round. I will not have it.
Leave Heaven the face to frown, Earth still will cower
Before that awful Presence, and again,
Or swift or slow, the Altar on the hearth
Rivet the ancient fetters. Other Realms
Have seen the throne learn wisdom from the lips
Of the far-seeing many. But, in mine,
The Prince shall force his People to be free,
Or spurn them to their self-wrought servitude,
The phantom sceptre of a World unseen,
Unknown, and unexistent.

ABDIEL.

Look how bright
The lamp of the Madonna gleams and glows !

LUCIFER.

The most beneficent deity e'er conceived.
Want you the brand and scope of Man, he is
Maker of Gods. A novice at the trade,
He made God out of winds and thunder-clouds,

The unpropitious seasons, threatening moons,
And the invisible ambushade of death.
Poor frightened babe, he worshipped with a wail,
Clutching his mother earth, and in her face
Burying his fears. Then childlike artist grown,
He craved for form, and from the shapes around,
Contorted, fair, the figure of himself,
Moulded his deities ; in wood, in stone,
Around his bed, his banquet-board, his tomb,
As yet a bungler. But when youth infused
Into the sap and marrow of his brain
The vernal subtleties of love, he dreamed
Of Gods as fair as he himself would be,
Majestic, abstract, yet with solid power
To make a goddess tremble ; and behold !
Under the yearning passion of his thought
The embryonic marble sloughed its shell,
And Gods of strength and beauty trod the earth,
Their forehead high in heaven. Mighty Gods,
And mighty maker of them ! Had he done
No other thing than this to prove his craft,
Man would have justified his birth, and thus
Exonerated Nature for her failures,
Too-oft abortive mother.

ABDIEL.

Pagan Prince,
Those Gods are dead.

LUCIFER.

The Gods all die at last,
Or fair, or foul ; for Man who perisheth
Can not beget a God imperishable.
But he within his workshop labours still,
Inventing new Divinities. When the pulse
Of amorous Manhood slackened, and his heart
Pined for the fixed felicities of home,
He fashioned God a father, then a child,
Gave him a wife and mother, eager still,
True to his artist instinct, to exalt
The latest idol of himself ; and hence,
When with the hearth's sweet sanctities entwined,
Came sickness, death, and sorrow, his new Gods
He hewed in anguish, beautiful no more,
But lacerated, tender, sad, austere,
Grave with the weight of disciplined desire :
Ingenuous, touching, egoist Maker still !

ABDIEL.

And how, sagacious Prince, will you decree

A strict and permanent divorce betwixt
Man and his shadow ?

LUCIFER.

'Tis impossible.

But once Man knows the shadow is his own,
And starts at it no more, nor grovels down
Low on the ground where it is thrown, 'twill serve.
Man will be godlike when he has no Gods,
Or owns them creatures of his own begetting,
And loves but fears them not. Thus answer them,
Or any way you will that leaves my mind
Impregnable against all compromise.
And, pray you, see the oil within that lamp
Remains replenished. [Exit LUCIFER.]

ABDIEL (*alone*).

O thou sophist, Man !
Reason by reason proved unreasonable,
Continues reasoning still ! Confronted close,
What is this Reason ? Like the peacock's tail,
Just useful for a flourish, nothing more ;
And when 'tis down, the world goes on the same.
Poor Lucifer ! He fancies that the brain

Can banish contradiction, so that life
Trembles no more than doth an even balance,
With intellect and passion nicely poised
In friendly scales. Burn on, thou tranquil lamp!
Thou dost not reason.

THE MATTERHORN.

*Generation after generation, they come and they go :
They are brief as the clouds that melt, they are vain as
the winds that blow.
They climb to the heights of ruin, they climb but they
cannot stay :
They have wings that flag in the ether, they have feet
that are clogged with clay.*

THE WEISSHORN.

*Down in the valley the hamlet is quiet with curls of
smoke.
There is happiness under the faggot, there is comfort
under the yoke.
'Mid the crags there is soaring and straining, the
tumult of things that dare,
The lightning of vagrant passions, the thunder of
vague despair.*

THE MATTERHORN.

*What do they want with our silence? We have eyes,
but they do not heed;*

*We have tongues, but they do not listen. We have ears
for each thought and deed.*

*They look on our face for a moment, they look, and
wonder, and prate:*

*They are straws on the stream, they are flakes in the
foam, they are fashioned and steered by Fate.*

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE I

[The Village Street.]

FIRST PEASANT.

Good-night. The stars gleam sharply.

ADAM.

Aye, there is

An undistinguished multitude of stars,
That hinder not the darkness.

SECOND PEASANT.

Ho! 'Tis Adam.

Know you the hour, friend?

ADAM.

Wherefore should I know it?

Eternity moves indivisibly.

We men are but the hands that feign the time,
Expedients of a fiction.

FIRST PEASANT.

Well, good-night!

[The peasants pass on.]

SECOND PEASANT.

Whenever from his clammy trade he comes,
He mumbles thus. Look! he has got his spade,
Uncanny weapon. . . . Go you with the Saints!

FIRST PEASANT.

Saint Michael guard you! [They part.]

[The clock in the tower of the village church strikes.]

ADAM (*alone*).

Now you wit the hour.

Does it not feel as though the scranny dead
Were tugging at the chain that tolls that sound?
The days devour the days, the minutes feed

On the slow minutes that preceded them :
Time is himself an hourly murderer.
He hath assassinated worlds of life,
That we may live ; whom he in turn will slay,
To grow him further victims. Homeward now.

[ELSPETH comes down the street.]

Where go you, child, so lately in the night ?

ELSPETH.

To Father Gabriel.

ADAM (*shouldering his spade*).

She is troubled, then.

Our hearts are graveyards, wherein dead woes sleep ;
But flowers should grow above them.

[They both pass on. ABDIEL comes out from the shadow of
the Church.]

ELSPETH.

What do you here ?

ABDIEL.

Await your footstep, as the night awaits
The movement of the morning.

E

ELSPETH.

Touch me not ;

Nor think in me to find love's simpleton.

Go, pass your pretty counterfeits elsewhere.

ABDIEL.

I swear I love you, and I swear again——

ELSPETH.

When, like the cuckoo, love repeats its note,
And doubles all it says, one knows, full sure,
'Twill soon depart.

ABDIEL.

Mine is no cuckoo love.

ELSPETH.

Come with me then to Father Gabriel,
And tell him firmly what in faltering tones
You oft have told to me.

ABDIEL.

To-night ! To-night ?

Wait till to-morrow.

ELSPETH.

Love knows no to-morrow,
No night, no day, only the present minute.
Yours are all yesterdays. Alack! too sure,
Within the waning crescent of your love
Another do I full foreshadowed see.

ABDIEL.

Tush! Tush! In truth you are the only maid,
Or in the vale or on the mountain-side,
Whose kirtle I have watched.

ELSPETH.

Watch it no more.
'Tis only crawling love, when hacked in twain,
Will piece again. My love lived in the air,
And you have hurt its wing. Now, what is left?
Only these bootless flutterings. . . Hush! One comes.

[ABDIEL disappears behind the wall of the Church. EVE
comes down the village street.]

EVE.

My timid Elspeth, whither at this hour?
The loosened wains stand tilted in the lodge,

And the warm steers lie blinking in their stalls.
There's not one truant chirrup in the eaves.
The very bats are weary of their flight.
Only the owls about the belfry whoop,
Mischristened birds of wisdom. They who are wise
Move only in the daylight.

ELSPETH.

Wherefore then
Is Eve abroad?

EVE.

I? I was in my way
To Father Gabriel; safe and innocent tryst.

ELSPETH.

And so was I.

EVE.

Come then.

ELSPETH.

I cannot.

EVE.

Why?

Do I not hear you sobbing?

[She puts her hand to ELSPETH's face.]

What is this?

All moist with weeping! These untimely tears
Will pale the young carnation in your cheeks,
As April washes all the gold away
From March's primroses. What is it, dear?
Or if to me you will not whisper it,
Breathe it to Father Gabriel. Come, sweet, come.

ELSPETH.

I cannot. And why should I? None was near.
Only the darkling blossoms of the wood
Or saw or heard it. Shall I tell it you?
It is so sweet to sin. But was it sin?
I deemed it love; and can his falsehood change
My trustfulness to shame? I cannot bear it.

EVE.

Be angry with your tears, and they will pass,
As a strong wind can blow the rain away.
Now, come along with me.

ELSPETH.

No, not to-night!
Let me tell *you*, instead. Absolve me, dear.

All the shrill amorous voices of the Spring
Seemed echoing in my brain and in my blood,
Until—until—you cannot see me, can you?—
Come just a little nearer me—until—

[She embraces EVE.]

He kissed me—so!

EVE.

Be married to him, dear.

Who may it be?

ELSPETH.

Nay, ask me not to-night?

EVE.

I will not. Best tell Father Gabriel.
For to my darkened sense it seems our hearts
Throb toward the stroke of some dread mystery,
Whose hour awaits us. I can help you not,
For you have known what I have never dreamed,
Nor must until—forgive me!—I forgot.
'Tis nothing surely. You, instruct me, dear;
'Tis I that am the baby.

ELSPETH.

Sweet! how sweet!

Too sweet to be forgotten, well or ill !
Too sweet to be forgiven, if not well !
Too sweet to be foregone, even if ill !
The very mouth and portal of the hive,
Limed with its honey !

[She covers her face with her hands.]

EVE.

Best come, Elspeth, come !
And in the dark of the Confessional
Find light and peace.

ELSPETH.

What ! Tell it all again !
No, rather do it ! That, if shame, were sweet.
The other is too bitter.

EVE.

How you weep !
Well, not to-night. I will not press you more.
There ! go and sleep under the thatch of home.

[Kisses her.]

My kisses will not hurt you. And, meanwhile,
Do with your sorrow as tired vagrants do,

Who fling their heavy pack on the hard ground,
And use it for a pillow. Woe sleeps sound,
With woe beneath it.

ELSPETH.

Yes. I must indeed
Shake off this pain, or it will throttle me.
Good-night! Forget it! Understand it not!
Though sweet, yet bitter, best not understood!
[They kiss, and ELSPETH turns homeward.]

SCENE II

[The Interior of the Church. EVE in the Confessional.]

EVE.

I confess to Almighty God, to the blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the Saints, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed; through my fault, through my fault, through my exceeding fault.

Father ! since I last confessed,
There is tumult in my breast :
Tumult that unbidden streams
Onward through my days and dreams ;
Something haunting every place,
Something that I cannot chase ;
Something, something I still feel
Even when in prayer I kneel ;
Voice that seemeth always near,
Voice I listen for and fear ;
Shadow of a presence fled,
Presence I desire and dread.

When the pallid morn doth break,
He is waiting as I wake,
Come from dreamland dim but deep,
Dawning with myself from sleep ;
Never seen, but part of sight,
Mirage both of day and night.

FATHER GABRIEL.

Doth he love you, daughter dear ?

EVE.

Never, never, to my ear,
Father, hath he whispered love,
More than stars that shine above,
Seen at night through branch and stem,
Do to those that gaze at them.
But, at noon, when lie my flocks
Quiet 'mong the quiet rocks,
Should a lamb or start or bleat,
Straight I think I hear his feet,
Coming downward, soft and strong,
Strong as torrent, soft as song.
Do I take my Rosary out,
And with lips and ears devout
Low recite with closed eyes
The Seven Dolorous Mysteries,
Fancies mundane, fancies fair,
Come betwixt me and my prayer.
Nor doth sunset take away
Restlessness of dawn and day.
I still see him when 'tis low,
Feel him in the afterglow.
Twilight, shortening all we see,
Seems to bring him nearer me.

When I draw around my head
The white curtains of my bed,
Wandering in an Eden dim,
All my dreams are drenched with him.

For these and for all the other sins, I cannot bring to my remembrance, I am heartily contrite, and I humbly beg pardon of God, and penance and absolution from you, my Ghostly Father.

FATHER GABRIEL.

Child, if steadfast keep the will,
Holy lives are holy still.
Vainly unclean demons lure,
If the heart remaineth pure ;
Purer even after trial,
If temptation meet denial.
Be not troubled, daughter dear.
Oft you see a streamlet clear
Chafed to foam by rocks that thwart :
So, child, will your limpid heart,
Torn by love, be, after all,
White as is a waterfall.

You have got a lover true,
Who unseen consorts with you.
'Tis your Guardian Angel. Talk
With him when you sit or walk.
He is ever at your side ;
Hark to him, in him confide.
Keep him near you night and day ;
He will never lead astray,
Never harm you, never leave,
Stay with you both morn and eve,
Comfort, counsel, and caress,
Tranquillise your restlessness.

When the birds begin to cheep,
When you wake, and when you sleep,
Holy-water on your brow
Sprinkle, as I sprinkle now.
Sprinkle it around your bed,
Sprinkle it where'er you tread ;
On the lintel, on the floor :—
Go in peace, and sin no more.

[EVE rises, and leaves the Confessional.]

SCENE III

[EVE in her bed, with her hands crossed on her breast.]

EVE.

I.

Now, at the closing of the day,
We, Virgin Mother, meekly pray
That Thou wilt clean and spotless keep
Our spirit, waking or asleep.

2.

Let nothing in our hearts excite
Vain dreams or phantoms of the night.
Our yearnings purify that so
Our bodies slumber white as snow.

3.

To God the Father, and the Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One,
Beginning, End, of all we be,
Thanksgiving, praise, eternally.

[She sleeps.]

SCENE IV

[FATHER GABRIEL comes out of the Church, and locks
the door.]

FATHER GABRIEL.

All is still in the little town ;
And the belfry sounds eleven.
All is still, and the stars look down
On the snowpeaks far, on the near ones brown,
On hoary Tourbillon's feudal frown,
From an untroubled Heaven.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

SCENE I

SUNDAY MORNING

[Groups of men and women outside the Village Church.
The bells ringing merrily.]

CRONE. Mercy on us ! What a clang and a clatter they do make ! Up and down, down and up, and never a taking of breath. They seem to think no one has anything to say but themselves.

1ST MATRON. The Blessed Mother must be honoured, grannie, even if it does spoil talk a bit ; and how better than by the tongues of all the belfry ?

2D MATRON. *Santa Klaus !* Look at Elspeth ! Bib and tucker, kirtle and stockings, complete. One might think *she* was the Rosière.

1ST MATRON. And why not? I lay she's as clean as any of them, as clean even as Eve herself, if not quite so winsome.

CRONE. Aye, there it is! The world always veered that way, ever since I was in it. There's no such best as good looks. Your plain wench is never much, one way or t'other: too uncomely to be surmised crooked, too unheeded to have a wreath clapped on her head for perfection. Well, well, when one's old, one can go one's own way, and none heed.

1ST MATRON. But Eve *is* very good.

2D MATRON. Who's to tell? I suppose Father Gabriel knows; but the Confessional is as mum as the mountains, thank God.

CRONE. Aye, aye; that dark box knows a thing or two the quickest don't guess. Saint Mary help us! Our feet are not always as prim as our faces. 'Twas a frisky world, when I was green; and maybe 'tis so still! Love and naughtiness are always in their teens.

1ST PEASANT. Have the Englishmen gone?

GUIDE. Yes, before the mist curled. Nothing stops those people. When they want to climb, they take the weather for a lackey, and fancy it will turn

all ways to please them. Because the sun shines here, they think it will follow at their heels like a beggar, till they give it something, or tell it to go away.

2D PEASANT. Will they return, think you?

GUIDE. Likely enough, not; I don't like the look of the Weisshorn. Then, perhaps, they'll be content. I suppose life comes so easy to such folks, they covet death.

1ST PEASANT. That's a stake soon won. And so you wouldn't go with them?

GUIDE. I'd have gone, had it been any other day. But I don't want to miss seeing the crowning of the Rosière.

2D PEASANT. It'll be a rare sight. They ought to be coming soon. She's to be all in white.

3D PEASANT. Like a bride. Let's hope she'll really be one soon. But folks that are better than their neighbours are always tetchy difficult to please.

GUIDE. I don't think she's proud.

4TH PEASANT. Proud? After all, what's pride? The top of the Matterhorn's not proud; but it's not easy to get at. And Eve's got a far-off way with her, that makes a man gaze, but doesn't help him to get any nearer.

GUIDE. You've said it. Good 's good, but fair is better ; and then she's both. Though she's a sight cleverer than the other lasses, she minds her flocks, and says her prayers.

1ST PEASANT. I think, of late, she's been oftener in church than ever.

2D PEASANT. And when Father Gabriel takes such pains to teach her, he thinks her none the worse for her April face and her trim little gait.

3D PEASANT. Neither will Saint Peter, I warrant, when she knocks him up. I suspect he lets all the pretty ones sneak in, somehow.

4TH PEASANT. Much of a Heaven it would be, if he didn't. See ! here they come.

[A Procession, formed of the young girls of the village, comes along the street, singing the Litany of Loreto. In their midst is EVE, dressed in white, and wearing a white veil.]

1ST MATRON. Come, we'd better be going in, or we shan't have good places.

CRONE. Lord ! Lord ! how pretty she does look ! She could not be more beautiful, if she were already in Paradise.

2D MATRON. And so innocent ; with her eyes

on the ground, as though ashamed of her own goodness.

CRONE. Aye, and how sweetly the children sing! all the more sweetly, like the birds, because they do not understand what they are saying.

1ST MATRON. You, first.

[They push the heavy curtain aside and enter, and the rest follow. The Procession enters the Church, singing the close of the Litany.]

SCENE II

[FATHER GABRIEL reciting Mass ; the Choir, accompanied by a harmonium, singing the parts allotted to it.]

FATHER GABRIEL.

Kyrie, Eleison !

Christe, Eleison !

Kyrie, Eleison !

[The Choir sings.]

EVE (*praying*).

In the hour of my temptation,
Lord ! have mercy on me !

In the hour of my tottering,
Christ ! have mercy on me !
In the hour of my repentance,
Lord ! have mercy on me !

[PRINCE LUCIFER, who has entered the Church along with COUNT ABDIEL, leans against a pillar where EVE can see him.]

EVE (*praying*).

Lo ! there He stands :
But with unfolded hands,
And knees not bent in prayer.
Why did I bid him come ?
His lips are locked and dumb ;
And yet—and yet—my heart is glad to know that he is
there !
No more upon the mountain-side
With workday kirtle and unribboned crook,
His eyes upon me look,
But here in white apparel of a bride.
I close my eyes, but see him still.
Have mercy on me, Lord, have mercy !
Do what I will,
The incense and the flowers and the chants grow
dim ;

Or if they penetrate my sense, they fill
My heart, instead of Thee, with him !

LUCIFER (*to himself*).

Her thoughts from earth have got away so far,
That, like a lark whose soaring we pursue
Till in celestial vacancy the song
Dwindles to doubt, her soul is buried in Heaven.
If she can thus on fantasy unseen
Concentrate adoration, how would love,
Love of a living presence, bind her heart
To sweet idolatry ! She nothing hears
Save the angelic canticles, nothing sees
But the imagination of her breast,
On which she broods. The rescued lamb should be
Still in her arms, as she lives still in mine,
Fondly remembered.

FATHER GABRIEL.

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi,
Miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi,
Miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi,
Dona nobis pacem.

EVE (*praying*).

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,

Give me peace, give me peace !

The mists are round me rolled and curled,

The dark and dangers of the way increase.

I cannot pray,

Pray as of old.

My thoughts are like a flock astray.

Wilt Thou not call them back,

Back to the heavenly track,

Unto the trodden pathway of thy fold ?

Bid these strange tumults cease !

Thyself upon my heart enthrone !

Make me Thine own, Thine own !

Give me peace, give me peace !

LUCIFER (*to himself*).

What seeks she in the hollow of her palms,

Making her eyes a darkness, shutting out

The clear and wholesome presence of the day ?

Either she hides from earthy visitant

Her heart should welcome, or to vaporous guest

Gives useless lodging. Tender little head,

And hands unmarred by shepherding, ye should

Not frustrate thus each other, locking up
The treasure each contains. A bride elect,
Arrayed for barren nuptials, how she would
Adjust the part of love's own celebrant !
Now she but plays with marriage, and enfolds
A shadowy bridegroom. . . . O unnatural Nature !
Why is thy work so prodigal of waste ?
Thou, like a wanton mother, dost refuse
To suckle our legitimate desires,
Thy very offspring. Thy delight alone
Is in the getting, selfish sensualist !
Content though half thy teeming progeny,
Beauty, and youth, and genial appetite,
Pine unfed foundlings !

FATHER GABRIEL.

[Reciting the beginning of the Gospel according to St. John.]

Et verbum caro factum est.

[They all kneel.]

LUCIFER (*to himself*).

“The Word, made flesh.” The Word, that is, the Spirit.
Why then oppose them ? If the spirit endues
A carnal garment, should it not revere

The consort of its choosing, until death
Divorce the nuptials? Granted that the body
Is kindled by the spirit, spirit should own
The substance that it feeds on. Yet this man,
This simple soul, this lantern to the simple,
If he should speak, will glorify the flame,
Anathematise the fuel, making base
And bestial, by the act of banning it,
What complete fusing of the flesh and spirit
Can burn to ether. He is going to speak.

[Mass being over, EVE and her companions approach the
altar-rails.]

FATHER GABRIEL.

And now, my children, gather round,
And listen humbly to the sound
Of holy counsel through me poured,
As by a conduit, from the Lord.
The words I utter are not mine :
They come from unseen source divine,
Cleansing, where'er they freely flow,
The soul from sin, the heart from woe.

There is a world you have not seen,
A world of turmoil and chagrin,

Where wealth and penury maintain
A conflict cruel, endless, vain.
How blest are we, my children dear,
Safe in our mountain haven here,
Far from the sea and storms of life,
Far from the struggle and the strife.

But where shall we our souls seclude
So safely, sin may not intrude ?
You know the shameless bird of spring,
When innocent warblers pair and sing,
Drops its foul egg within their nest,
Where, fostered by a loving breast,
And warmed to life with their own brood,
Sharing their couch, their warmth, their food,
The half-fledged alien writhes about,
And from their own home thrusts them out.

ABDIEL (*to himself*).

Alas ! poor cuckoo ! Yet I ween it were
Scarcely the spring, without you !

FATHER GABRIEL.

So to your hearts, God meant to be
Close nests of loving purity,

If thought unholy steal its way,
Slow it matures from day to day,
Feeds on the warmth it findeth there,
Expels peace, purity, and prayer,
And, foully glorying in its guile,
Dwells in the breast it doth defile.

ABDIEL (*to himself*).

Thus Nature lends herself to any text,
Dispassionately various. If one owned
The ready fancy this wise preacher boasts,
One could malign the turtles.

FATHER GABRIEL.

Therefore, dear daughters, watch and pray ;
And pure like her we crown to-day,
Alike in thought, and word, and deed,
With Mary Mother intercede
To tend you safely till you feel
Your earthly senses faint and reel,
And burst upon your soul's desire
The Hosannas of the heavenly choir.

[FATHER GABRIEL, having placed a chaplet of white wild-flowers
on EVE's head, retires to the Sacristy. EVE, followed by

her companions and the congregation, passes down the nave into the street, where they all linger awhile. PRINCE LUCIFER, with COUNT ABDIEL at his side, approaches EVE, and presents to her a bunch of white roses.]

LUCIFER.

My roses to your rose ; not grown so fair,
Nor yet so faultless ; frail, ephemeral,
But such as homage offers. When they fade,
Your sweetness and my memory will survive them.

[PRINCE LUCIFER and COUNT ABDIEL take their leave.]

CRONE. What did he say ?

1ST MATRON. I didn't catch the words ; did you ?

2D MATRON. Not the last ones. But what I did hear was beautiful.

1ST PEASANT. Yes, that's the sort of talk they like. Flowers and fair words would people a nunnery.

2D PEASANT. Aye, if one had such a tongue and such roses, Elspeth wouldn't flout a fellow long.

[The villagers disperse, and EVE, attended by some of her companions, walks homeward.]

1ST MATRON. Did you see how shy she was ? She never answered him a word.

2D MATRON. What would you have her say ? To

grand folks like him, you can but answer "Yes, sir," and "No, sir." Best say nothing.

3^D MATRON. She looked mighty pleased, though.

1ST MATRON. What girl wouldn't? He treated her as though she were the Princess, and he the peasant.

SCENE III

[LUCIFER and ABDIEL going up the mountain towards
Castle Tourbillon.]

LUCIFER.

Were I yon presbyter, I had conceived
Some variation from his ancient text.
Be pure. Agreed! But love is purity,
The rest abomination.

ABDIEL.

Which is which?
That hedge thrives best 'neath which there runs a ditch.
Consult the boar, the turbot, and the wren,
They will provide an answer. Men, though men,
Have their foundation deep down in the brutes,
And topmost boughs are suckled by the roots.

LUCIFER.

She is the purest maid who loves the most ;
Who loves the least, the maiden most unclean.
For let ascetic skulls and wintry dames
Inculcate chaste stagnation as they may,
In her spring season Nature will ferment.
Bid May be March, go countermand the sap
Of trickling oaks, forbid the nightingale
To wail and warble to the vernal moon,
Stop the careering throstle in his song,
And tell the womb of seasonable June
Bear snow, not roses ; then expect to find
Maidenhood chill as frosty infancy,
Nor thrill with outward longings. O these priests,
These footpads rather, who with thievish hands
Take Nature by the throat and bid her yield
Her wealth or her existence !

ABDIEL.

A fair thing ;
Comely as autumn, winsome as the spring ;
Half blossom and half fruit. Who would not cull
A rose so sweet, a hip so beautiful ?
The sunshine-shadow of mid summer lies

Half hidden in the hazel of her eyes ;
And something in her footstep and her seeming
Allures like waking, yet illudes like dreaming.
Yet, sooth to please the sacristy, this flower
Must wilt from drouth, that pineth for a shower.

LUCIFER.

You rave as though you loved her.

ABDIEL.

If it be

That I love *her*, I love all such as she.
When once again the wilding briar blows,
Fix you your fancy on some single rose ?
When nights wax long and pathways darkened are,
Will you be guided but by one bright star ?
This draught, or that, will quench your thirst, my
brother ;
And one sweet maid's as sweet as any other.

LUCIFER.

There spoke the boar, the turbot, and the wren.
The universal base of brutal lust
Soars tapering to a fine particular love,

Flame passing into ether. One fair face,
One comprehensive, one exclusive face,
Flower of all flowers, for every flower in one—
Fie on your similes! A love like this
Lights every path and quenches every thirst.

ABDIEL.

Will it quench yours? Then, sure, 'twill be the first.
The empty loves, from which you once quaffed deep,
Lie thick as potsherds on a midden-heap.

LUCIFER.

O, you evade distinction! Lusts, not love.
Who loves the costly clusters reared in heat,
The splendours of the hothouse, gorgeous blooms,
Lascivious tendrils, enervating scents,
The flowers of the seraglio? Who culls these
With hand of hesitating eagerness,
Presses their formal petals to his lips,
Or hides them 'neath his pillow, that his dreams
May by a secret theft be perfumèd?
No, 'tis the simple wilding of the hedge,
The blossom of the bramble, the musk-rose,
Startles the tear in gazing tenderness,

And melts imagination into love.
The tropic blooms of the abjur'd past,
That forced themselves upon the fancy, faugh !
Were savoured and forgotten. But this flower
Of shrinking loveliness enchains the sense,
And takes the memory captive.

[LUCIFER passes into the Castle.]

ABDIEL (*alone*).

Thus—thus—thus—

Reasons my self-discrowned Idealist,
Enforcing satisfaction. Reason? Reason !
Thou bawd, thou pimp, thou pandar to the passions,
Thou servile drudge, thou doubling advocate,
Thou specious lackey, lithe apologist,
Mere sycophant and shadow of the Will !
Never was keen point sharpened by the heart,
But the head straightway fledged it to the mark.
Let Will but set its appetite on war,
And Reason promptly will invent offence,
And furnish blood with arguments. Let lust
Muster its threat of lurid thunder-clouds,
Lo ! Reason, shimmering through the sultry wrack,
Will span it with a rainbow !

SCENE IV

[Night. EVE, undressed in her sleeping-chamber, and alone. Over the bed hangs the chaplet of flowers given her as the Rosière. In her hand she holds the roses given her by PRINCE LUCIFER.]

EVE.

He gave me these ; those, Father Gabriel.
Which do I prize the most ? O, these ! these ! these !
Why here dissemble which I love the best ?
Those at my head, but these within my breast !

[She sleeps, with his roses in her hand.]

SCENE V

MIDNIGHT.

THE MATTERHORN.

Is the storm coming on ? Do you hear it ?

THE WEISSHORN.

*It is roaring up from the south,
With the thunders piled on its back and the lightning
spears in its mouth.*

G

*It is driving the winds before it, it is driving them swift
and straight,
As the wolf drives the kid and the roebuck.*

THE MATTERHORN.

Tell it I stand and wait.

THE WEISSHORN.

*The trunks of the forest are creaking, the pine-tops waver
and sway,
And the rotten boughs on the air are tossed as the
torrent tosses the spray.
The veil of the snow is lifted, the folds of the mist are torn ;—*

THE MATTERHORN.

*Tell the thunder to hasten and hurry, lest my scorn
should die of its scorn.
Bid the torrents darken and deepen, bid the avalanche
madden down ;
For tempest and time have done their worst, and I still
stand crowned with my crown.
Let the frail light passions of pigmy man, like levin,
and wind, and rain,
With ephemeral fury rage and pass. I am motionless
and remain.*

ACT IV

SCENE I

[Interior of Castle Tourbillon.]

FATHER GABRIEL.

I, a poor priest, from you, a potent Prince,
Come craving audience.

LUCIFER.

Welcome, everywhere !
The Earth pertains to all ; not more to me
Than any mortal wight whose wisdom spends
The rich unearned inheritance of life.

FATHER GABRIEL.

The Church to kings and offshoots of a king

Gives special homage, special sanctity.
So, Prince! a priest's obeisance still allow.

LUCIFER.

Where is my Princedom? Where my potency?
My Court,—behold it! These ungolded walls,
Or, barer still, the palace of the hills,
Are all my Royalty.

FATHER GABRIEL.

It is not pomp,
Nor ostentatious servitors, though these
Are the legitimate clothing of a king,
But native chrism and self-anointed birth,
Assert the Prince. How will you disendue
The mantle dropped on Majesty from Heaven?

LUCIFER.

By hanging it against the wall and there
Letting time's cobwebs mildew in its folds.
The owner's soon forgot.

FATHER GABRIEL.

And yet there is

One all too regal quality you have used
'Gainst one not even regal.

LUCIFER.

What is that ?

FATHER GABRIEL.

You have invaded and usurped my realm,
And with the sceptre you disown have seized
The dearest slice of all my territory.
O, give it back to me ! You have so much.
Leave me my little !

LUCIFER.

What have I usurped,
More yours than mine, more mine than any one's,
More any one's than no one's, save it be
Freely by its sole owner, self, be given ?

FATHER GABRIEL.

O, you have toppled me down from my high seat,
The pulpit and the altar ! from my back
The robe of white authority have stripped,
Discrowning conscience !

LUCIFER.

Conscience wears no crown,
Unless the crown of martyrdom, and reigns
Beyond attainder.

FATHER GABRIEL.

You have tainted it,
Melting the pearl of chastity in wine
Of splendid lust

LUCIFER.

I have been patient, priest,
And patient shall be still. But, patient, hear me.
You hail me Prince. My Principality
I have thrown off as lightly as a cloak
Too sultry for the season. Where is my sceptre?
Where splendour? And where lust? Why, dainty
things
Deemed themselves daintier if I deigned to foul them.
Are they within these walls? . . . Yes, *She* is here,
Your lamb of yesterday, my lamb to-day,
And mine, I trust, for ever! Purity!
Pure is she still, even in the starveling sense
That satisfies the sacristy; in mine,

Pure, pure will she be ever, save you coax
Her conscience back to servitude, and cog
Her waking senses to an unloved touch
With opiate of marriage.

FATHER GABRIEL.

With what spells
Did you induce her here ?

LUCIFER.

With spells of Nature ;
With incantations of the forest-side,
And simples of the mountain. These black arts
On her were exercised ;—but others, none.
The firs and pine-trees were my conjurors,
Waving their arms above her till she fell
Into fond dreaming. Fountains, and the wells
Of downward-dancing rivulets composed
The songful charm that lured her to my will.
Out of its seething foam the cataract
Mixed the strong philtre that enamoured her ;
And clear and cloudy opals of the mist
Hung her all round with magic amulets.
For Nature is a wizard ; whence it is

That, being the close confederate of love,
She works her operations and intent
On hearts, true, simple, fair, and natural ;
While those that think without her aid to taste
The morsels and still fresh delights of love,
Live on with baffled appetite, or, gorged
With lustful gobbets, vomit them forthwith
As soon as swallowed. Spells ! What spells I used ?
The spell that brings the dewdrop to the rose,
Without the rose's asking ; Nature's spells,
Transcending mortal artifice.

FATHER GABRIEL.

 You speak
Of Nature tenderly, and well she may
Serve one who loves her well. But why allow
E'en from her hand a gift you cannot own ?
A simple shepherdess, a village suckling,—
You, you, the flower and seed of regal loins,
You cannot marry her.

LUCIFER.

 How know you that ?
I cannot marry her ? Say, would not, rather.

'Tis not her birth nor simpleness that bans
The rites you guard ; heraldic blazonries
Are fireworks for the foolish. It is love
Enjoins me still leave Nature to complete
The piece she hath begun. Why interrupt
The slow sure weaving of love's natural bond
With marriage contract, sudden, forcible,
Strong till 'tis strained and snaps? That will I never.
For Marriage is the winding-sheet of love ;
And, after it, most mortals in their hearts
Carry a coffin uninterred. Could I
On to the unwritten covenant of love
Append that clogging and unneeded seal,
This simple shepherdess, this village suckling,
This gossamer of the hills, this what you will,
This mine at least, if mine she wills to be,
Should buy your sanction.

FATHER GABRIEL.

Is she then to live
Your uncontracted and precarious toy ?

LUCIFER.

My toy, my joy, my happy everything,

My pain perhaps as well, my pulse, my being,
All unto me, as I all unto her,
By lasting choice of unlocked liberty.

FATHER GABRIEL.

But think, sir ! think ! if she should here abide,
The unconsecrated consort of your roof,
She the crowned flower and lily of all our lilies,
How would that Grace, whose advocate I am,
Be wounded through her nature ! I in vain
Should champion Grace to one so natural
As you, alas ! But you will pity me,
And, as you are or might have been a king,
Spare my poor kingdom ?

LUCIFER.

And surrender mine !

The only one I have, the only one
I care to have, no larger sure than yours,
And just as dear. I, who relinquished throne,
Sceptre, dominion, splendour, majesty,
The ownership of half the solid globe,
And the whole ocean, rather than consent
Love still shall be the altar's acolyte,

Not its own priest and celebrant, to yield
The sword of conscience to a—nay, forgive!
Honest, I can revere your honesty,
But wherefore more? We lose ourselves in words
From the high road of action.

EVE (*from within*).

Lucifer!

LUCIFER.

You hear her voice? Hark to its purity!
Pure as the tinkle of the cattle-bells,
Pure as the mountain air she still doth breathe,
Pure as the snow on topmost Matterhorn,
Though haply not so cold, and O, be sure!
More steadfast if more melting.

EVE.

Lucifer!

LUCIFER.

Farewell. She shuts her book, and seeks my face.
My face must turn to seek her.

[FATHER GABRIEL departs.]

SCENE II

EVE.

Lucifer !

LUCIFER.

Shepherdess !

Your flock is coming ; flock of my stray thoughts
And vagrant longings, huddling to your call.
Secure them in your fold !

EVE.

My Prince ! My teacher !

I do begin to see with your far eyes,
To feel with your fine touch. But help me more.
To follow every zigzag of your mind
Seems easy, natural. But you must lead ;
I do not know the way.

LUCIFER.

Your hand—your mind—

Let me feel both, complete companionship ;
And shortly, Eve, nor you nor I will know
Which leads, which follows.

EVE.

I would rather follow.

I have read, and read, all that you bid me read ;
And, yes, I understand, in part,—in part.
Now shall we climb the terrace, or the woods ?
Which would you like the best ?

LUCIFER.

The terrace, child ;
First mentioned, therefore foremost in your thoughts.
We have one way, one will.

EVE.

The time seemed long.

LUCIFER.

Nay, be not so impatient. Time will come
When you will chide with Time he did not lag.
Each momentary want that's touched but brings
Us nearer to the moment no one wants ;
And every stage accomplish'd by hope
Marks one more milestone to the door of death.

EVE.

And yet I did not waste the time in wishing

Its length would end. I studied till the stroke
Set my heart free. But wherefore do you speak
So frequently of death ?

LUCIFER.

Because of life,
Life the sole good and object that we know.
Omit death's certain sharpness, life would lack
The salt that lends it savour ; we should live,
Of living unaware.

[COUNT ABDIEL comes along the terrace.]

What says Count Abdiel ?
Is it not absolute that we prize life,
Because we lose it ?

ABDIEL.

Life is a poor play,
With death for anti-climax.

LUCIFER.

Rather say,
A touching tragedy, complete by death ;
In action manifold, but still the tale
Closes with awe.

ABDIEL.

Prince, when I write a play,
You shall be critic. As for life you praise,
It opens feebly, and the interest flags
Long ere the close.

LUCIFER.

Nay, but perform it well,
'Twill serve to please,—audience and actor both.

ABDIEL.

'Tis all rehearsal. Just as we know our part,
'Tis taken from us, and some novice thumbs
The rôle we have mastered. . . . But your dialogue
Demands my exit. With your pleasure, Prince.

[ABDIEL descends the mountain.]

EVE.

He is your friend, and yet I do not like him.
He leaves a bitter meaning in the air
Whene'er he goes.

LUCIFER.

In softly swelling youth,
He was not handled tenderly enough ;

And as the part we bruise matures the first,
His heart was gone before his head was ripe.
That sort of man we should commiserate,
Not reprehend o'ermuch. To see aright,
The head and heart must focus on the point,
While he discerns but singly, so amiss.

EVE.

Should see, like you ! Life, even death itself,
Takes a serener aspect from your voice,
And, while I listen, I am helped to feel
That—that—nay, help me !—I am lame of speech—
What is it I would say ?

LUCIFER.

That life is good ?

EVE.

Yes ; and to feel that life is good, not ill,
Seems to have made me other than I was ;
As in that sudden season when the kine
Quit long confinement within wintry fold
For summer pastures ;—something like to that.
For I was taught by Father Gabriel

To look on life as Alpine climbers do
The mountain they ascend ; a Heaven at top,
But, as I clomb, crevasses all the way,
Hidden and cruel pitfalls. So I lived,
Alarmed at being alive. Now, now, in life
I find a friend, who feared an enemy.
This is the change that changes all the rest.

LUCIFER.

How quick you apprehend ! 'Tis true, then, true,
You find life good ?

EVE.

It seems so good,—with you.
Without you haply 'twere not good at all.
Nay—nay—I tremble lest that it should then
Be worse than heretofore.

LUCIFER.

Dear tender heart !
That fain would look but only where I point.
Yet life is good, in every circumstance.
Fling open all the windows of your being,
And let the universal air invade
And winnow the stifling chambers of the past.

H

For if we firmly grasp that life is good,
It then becomes imperative to live,
Live freely, fearlessly.

EVE.

Then show me how.
For like a willing leaf upon a stream,
I follow all the currents of your talk,
Now here, now there, but faithful everywhere.

LUCIFER.

Commend your speech, not mine ; for you are born
Of Nature, and it is from her, I note,
You sucked your utterance. 'Tis her alphabet
That shapes your words, and serves you to express
Thoughts that would else be dumb. The flocks, the
streams,
The mountains and their hazard pathways, lend you
Materials for speech.

EVE.

Because I know them.

LUCIFER.

You know them, for you feel them.

EVE.

But my speech
Must sound so rude and simple to your ears.

LUCIFER.

Not simpler than the cataracts, not more rude
Than the spontaneous whisperings of the wind
'Mong ripening wheat-stems. Most speech is unreal,
And foreign to the purposes of thought ;
Unreal, those who utter it. But you
Have from the infant-teacher, Nature, learnt
Your tongue, and so have nothing to unlearn.

EVE.

But, O, how much to learn !

LUCIFER.

Then learn it quick !

There is another tutor unto whom,
When Nature hath her rudiments instilled,
She passes on her pupil. Grounded well
In elements of Nature, man is ripe
With an intelligent longing to imbibe

The logic and the poetry of Love.
For Love hath this distinction, it combines
Necessity with freedom, use with joy.
Not all the iron fetters tyrants forge
Are half so binding as love's liberty ;
Nor narrowest housewife bends with readier knees
Unto domestic office. Lowliest task
And loftiest aspiration are the poles
On which the perfect sphere of love revolves.
You follow with assent ?

EVE.

As doth the moon,
Which you have told me borrows from the sun
Her paler light. Whate'er you say sounds true,
Because you say it. This at least I know,
That no domestic office were too mean,
No task too low, for me to do for you.
O, if you were a shepherd, not a Prince,
How warm should be your hut, how bright your crook,
How brimming hot the cauldron on your hearth,
How snowy white your pillow ! I would sing,
Sing through my work, until I heard your voice,
And your returning presence was my song.

If this be love, then I am full of it.

I know no more.

LUCIFER.

My sweet, true shepherdess !

Nay, an you will, I will be shepherd too,

And clip the July fleeces for your hands

To spindle me a jacket.

EVE.

No, not that.

But since you are no shepherd, and I cannot
Comfort your coming with some savoury broth,
Or clothe you with my distaff, then I must
That new and lofty service undertake
You bend and offer me. For I am sure
That I would crawl upon the knees of love,
I who lack wings, wherever you would bid me.

LUCIFER.

Wings will you never lack ; and do not doubt
Our love will yet, as swallows oftentimes do,
Have commerce in the air !

[The bell in the tower strikes slowly thrice.]

EVE.

So soon to part !

LUCIFER.

Then stay !

EVE.

No, I will go ; for if I stayed
I still should want to stay. Eternity
Would never in its farthest chime bring round
The stroke of the reminding hour when I
Should from your voice be willing to depart.
But to obey you hath a sweetness in it
That honeys o'er the sting of separation.
But tell me ere I go—see, I am going—
Am I a little nearer to the height
To which you beckon ?

LUCIFER.

O higher far than I, by something got
From somewhere, where no man hath ever been.
Lend me your instinct, and sublimest reason
Were beggared in the effort to repay you !

[He kisses her on the forehead.]

EVE.

Into my heart could but your wisdom sink,
We never need be parted.

LUCIFER.

Lovely student !
When steals the shadow of the Matterhorn
On to the Weisshorn, we again shall meet.

EVE.

I, just a little wiser.

[EVE leaves him.]

LUCIFER (*alone*).

Sweet ! How sweet !
She minds me of a tardy spring that crowds
The primrose and anemone together ;
For childlike candour lingers in her gaze,
Though there already mantles to her cheek
The white and pink of maiden consciousness.
Yet must I wait, nor let impatience tread
On the close skirt of reverence. 'Twere ill
To pry too closely on a brooding love,
Or it might leave its nest, and its warm hopes
Never be fledged. Wait ! wait ! Yet it was just

That I who have with incandescent mind
Burnt up the tares and rubbish of the time,
Should find the strain of this fresh flower to grace
My exile with a garden.

[ABDIEL comes along the terrace.]

SCENE III

ABDIEL.

I am come
To crave your leave, Prince, to depart me hence.

LUCIFER.

Nay, say not "crave." You are as free as I.
If I have valued your fidelity,
It was not as a forfeit, but a gift.
But 'tis a quality of blood to weary
Of life devoid of action. Here, is nothing
Save ripening contemplation, that slow fruit
We never gather.

ABDIEL.

No, it is not that.
The comedy of human nature needs

No city apparatus ; and in sooth
Not the dimensions of the stage, nor yet
The trappings of the audience, make the play.
There's action everywhere. One village lass,
Skittish in blood, helped by two liquorish swains,
Is dramaturge enough. Nay, less will do,
If hazard be obsequious. You yourself
Act without cost the prettiest pastoral,
Which possibly the great scene-shifter, Fate,
Will follow with a tragedy.

LUCIFER.

Then stay,
And witness the performance to the end.
For never think, Count, I so jealous am
Of perfect happiness, I cannot brook
That you should look on it.

ABDIEL.

Too near the lights,
One misses the illusion. I would stand
A trifle farther off, but only stretch
The tether of my exile just so far,
You, when you will, can draw me back again.

LUCIFER.

Where may that be?

AEDIEL.

Down in the village, yonder!

LUCIFER.

The village! You? A pretty villager.
A sybarite asleep on hempen sheets;
Lucullus with some garlic for his supper.
What is your humour, now?

AEDIEL.

The one you have taught me.
You bring the village to the castle; I
The castle to the village carry down.
Where lies the difference? The sand will run
As glibly through the hour-glass every jot,
Whichever way you set it; and, meseems,
My topsy-turvy is as just as yours.

LUCIFER.

A cynic jest. Yet mark the difference.
Love lifts the village to the castle. What
May level you with yokels?

ABDIEL.

Love, again.

For one may love, though lacking theories
To glorify one's hunger. I have a tooth,
Well, like another ; like yourself, dear Prince ;
And, like yourself, my appetite selects
A mountain morsel.

LUCIFER.

Choice I must approve,
Since patterned on my own. What like is she ?
I fain would see the fair simplicity
Makes Abdiel forget to be a critic.

ABDIEL.

Sure one may love and criticise as well.
Perfection is in fragments ; piece them all,
And make a monster. She is well enough ;
A fitting portrait for a mountain frame,
No city picture.

LUCIFER.

Bring her to the castle.

Think you I am not satisfied to have
My share of life ? There is enough for all.

Felicity is infinite, and grows
Richer by spending.

ABDIEL.

Spoken like yourself,
And pity, so magnanimous a Prince
Should reign not, while the world's conspicuous thrones
Are ballasted with churls. Yet even you
Would not in your dominions house me here,
If I were at your frontier line to halt,
And crave to cross it.

LUCIFER.

Wherefore not? Come, test me.

ABDIEL.

What if I married her?

LUCIFER.

No fear of that.

ABDIEL.

In truth I shall.

LUCIFER.

She does not love you then,
And therefore makes a barter of the bond.

ABDIEL.

Nay, since you think no ill of those who give
Nor take precaution lest the gift thus given
Ruin the giver, I can throw away
The thing I wanted, wanted and have gained.
'Tis I propose the bond. You wonder why.
My practice 'gainst your theory, generous Prince ;
My humble jest 'gainst your high sentiment ;
Time must assay them. I may serve you still,
An exile from your exile.

LUCIFER.

Have your whim.

But true it is you part us : not in grudge ;
Nay, as two friends who sever to explore
Some doubtful region, with the firm intent
To meet again.

[ABDIEL descends the mountain.]

LUCIFER (*alone*).

'Tis better so ; for thus
The problem stands propounded : fettered love
Against a love unfettered, Heaven against Earth.
'Tis not the scene nor yet the audience

That makes the play ; there, Abdiel is right.
For any human hearts on any stage,
How mean, or tame, or circumscribed soe'er,
With their affections can compose a knot
The end unravels. We will play it out.
But for these cynic nuptials in the vale,
The action were imperfect. Now, 'twill move
To its fulfilment, full and manifest.
The kingdom I abandoned was too vast
For this our fine experiment. The hills
Fence a commodious narrowness for the test,
Excluding nothing needful. Hackneyed world,
Go thy trite road, so the free mind may make
A pathway of its own, and top the heights
Where habit comes not !

SCENE IV

[The Church and Churchyard in the Village.]

ADAM.

[Digging a grave, and singing as he does so.]

*The crab, the bullace, and the sloe,
They burgeon in the Spring ;*

*And when the west wind melts the snow,
The redstarts build and sing.
But Death's at work in rind and root,
And loves the green buds best ;
And when the pairing music's mute,
He spares the empty nest.*

*Death ! Death !
Death is master of lord and clown.
Close the coffin, and hammer it down.*

ABDIEL.

[Entering the churchyard.]

Who may it be for whom you dig this grave ?

ADAM.

'Tis more than I can tell you, sir, as yet,
Having no robe of prophecy. Death knows,
If you could ask him. I have served him well
This many a year. But he's a silent master,
And keeps his secrets to himself.

ABDIEL.

But why
Scoop you a grave, if none yet wanteth it ?

ADAM.

It will be wanted surely. Mine is a trade
That's never out of fashion. Other products
Wait upon whim or accident. Drought defrauds
The mower's hook, but Death's scythe findeth swathes
All the year round ; his harvest never fails.
Spring nips the young, and winter takes the old,
And many a summer maid is cankering fruit
For an autumnal coffin.

ABDIEL.

You would seem
To relish your vocation.

ADAM.

'Tis secure,
Since men are safe to die. Change changes not
That last of all our changes. Thus I sleep
Certain of occupation ; never less,
And sometimes more. It is a steady trade
Even at the worst of times ; and whiles there be,
Thanks to distemper, sickness, accident,
Death doth a roaring business. Never fear
That I with leisurely unordered graves

Shall overstock the market. Why, sir, you,
Who walk Eternity as though your road
Were long as it, or I who oftentimes,
Intent on carving others' sepulchres,
In their mortality forget my own,
Or, look you there! yon fair unheeding thing,
That nubile blossom blowing hitherward,
May need one ere to-morrow.

ABDIEL.

Sooth there is
No controverting "may-be." But the wise
With the uncertain certainty of death
Make no appointment.

[ABDIEL enters the Church. ELSPETH skirts the churchyard,
in order to avoid ADAM, who goes on digging the grave
and singing.]

*When nuts are brown and sere without,
And white and plump within,
And juicy gourds are passed about,
And trickle down the chin ;
When comes the reaper with his scythe,
And reaps and nothing leaves,*

*O then it is that Death is blithe,
And sups among the sheaves.*

Death! Death!

*Lower the coffin and slip the cord :
Death is master of clown and lord.*

[ELSPETH enters the Church.]

ABDIEL.

You need not tell him all.

ELSPETH.

I must ; or else
Damnation on my soul would heavier press,
And Hell be hotter still. Confession scours
Both stain and penalty. Wait here for me.
You will not leave me ?

[She goes into the Confessional.]

ABDIEL (*alone*).

If it comforts her,
'Twill injure no one. Yet how strange she should
Into the ear of male austerity
Confide the bubbles of her dancing blood.
If the revolt were awful as the tongue

Of scandal labels it, she could not do it,
Nor he, prescribing penance for the sin,
Absolve the culprit. 'Twixt the deed and doer
This wise tribunal, scorned by Lucifer,
Makes just distinction ; and the foul offence,
Branded as foul lest it should multiply,
Leaves the offender clean.

[FATHER GABRIEL enters the Church from the Sacristy.]

Your servant, father.

FATHER GABRIEL.

Say son, not servant ; it is I who serve
All who serve God. Have you then come to pray ?

ABDIEL.

Yes, to beseech you, father, if you will,
To rivet me in bonds of matrimony
With one the fairest now of all your flock,
Since Eve hath strayed from it.

FATHER GABRIEL.

You touch my wound,
But help to heal it, and shall mend the gap
Of my poor broken fence. Yet she will come,

Come back she will ; it is not possible,
Though she may leave her fleece upon the thorns,
She should not hear the Shepherd in the night,
And bleat repentance. Come, my son, and kneel,
And I straightway instruction will impart
To your converted longings.

ABDIEL.

Not so quick !

I want a wife, and not a theory
Pat to explain the unexplainable.
Life is a labyrinth whereof the thread
Is held by Death ; 'tis he will let me out
When the time comes. Meanwhile the maze is well,
With love for a companion.

FATHER GABRIEL.

But the Church
Mates not the faithful with the heretic.
Nay, were you Caesar of the pagan globe,
And she you woo a lowlier virgin still
Than any in my village, faith professed
In dogmas to the Church by God revealed,
And seeking of her sacraments, must be

The portal of humility wherethrough
You stoop to sacred marriage.

ABDIEL.

Go in there ;
A penitent awaits you. Then come forth,
And answer me again.

[FATHER GABRIEL enters the Confessional.]

ABDIEL (*alone*).

How lulled in peace !
These mountain chapels seem like havens reached
After a round of storms. Inventive man
Discovers medicine for all miseries.
These whitewashed walls, these thoughtful images,
These pots of gaudy posies, are in sooth
A garden and infirmary. Hurt souls
Here find, with ready dressing for their wounds,
A couch to lie on. Shallow Lucifer !
To quarrel with the comfort of the world,
Because it lodges in the heart and brain,
And not outside them, seen and tangible.
If we assume a sky, why not as well
A Heaven beyond it? Both are only space,

Filled with man's longings ; to dishearten these
Were to make space but ponderous emptiness.
Man needs some leaven for his daily life,
That else were sad to heaviness, some barm
By whose fermenting may his fancy rise
Beyond the level of confining fact ;
And for the lightening of simple souls
There's no such yeast as faith. What though the
prayers

Of weeping trones and genuflecting swains
Reach to no ear, they are not therefore lost,
But, like a fountain, vivify the air,
And, falling back again, refresh their source,
No drop, no motion, and no music wasted.

[FATHER GABRIEL and ELSPETH come out of the Confessional.
ELSPETH goes to the altar-rails, kneels, and prays.]

FATHER GABRIEL (*to* COUNT ABDIEL).

Alas ! that you may restitution make,
You needs must keep the very thing you stole,
And Heaven annex its sanction to the theft.
Yet do not prize it less because 'twas filched
Too soon, too easily, but reverence her
Who revered you too deeply to withhold

The secret of her nature. I will join
My prayer to hers your reparation may
Reap grace for its reward, and, with grace, faith.

[FATHER GABRIEL withdraws to the Sacristy. ELSPETH
comes down the Church.]

ELSPETH.

It is forgiven ; and you will call me wife ?

ABDIEL.

Others will call you that ; it is for them
You need fresh christening. I will call you mine,
And any name is good enough for love.

ELSPETH.

May I see Eve sometimes, despite the stain
To which she clings ?

ABDIEL.

See her as often, child,
As she will welcome you. But ponder this :
You now reproach each other, and her Prince,
Throned on his altitude of bondless love,
Will hold you worthless for the very knot
Which, in your eyes, secures your worthiness.

[They pass into the churchyard.]

ELSPETH.

You will not tire of me ?

ABDIEL.

Who tires of Spring ?

ELSPETH.

Ah ! time will come when I shall autumn be,
Without its loveliness.

ABDIEL.

Why, then, my days
Will be mid-winter, and your ripened store
Will comfort both.

[They pass on. ADAM sings, finishing the grave.]

*When logs about the house are stacked,
And next year's hose is knit,
And tales are told and jokes are cracked,
And faggots blaze and spit ;
Death sits down in the ingle-nook,
Sits down and doth not speak :
But he puts his arm round the maid that's warm,
And she tingles in the cheek.
Death ! Death !*

*Death is master of lord and clown ;
Shovel the clay in, tread it down.*

SCENE V

[PRINCE LUCIFER and EVE walking, hand in hand, up the mountain-side.]

EVE.

I feel so sad.

LUCIFER.

Do you regret the valley ?

EVE.

No, but I seem unequal to the heights,
Save when I hold your hand.

LUCIFER.

Then hold it always ;
For then to me it feels that high and low,
Mountain and vale, are only one, and make
Completion of each other.

EVE.

Would that I

Could reconcile all opposites, like to you !
Teach me the secret.

LUCIFER.

It is learnt, not taught,
And 'tis in our own journeys we discern
Life's contradictions but adjust the weight
The heart has got to bear, which else were galled
Were all the load one side. See ! Daylight is
Indebted to the darkness that 'tis day,
Spring unto winter that we hail it spring ;
And all things live upon their opposite,
Whose death would kill them.

EVE.

As I live on you,
Light-Bearer to my darkness ! Yet 'tis sad
To think that men—that men !—live, throbbing men,
Not faggots nor mere panniers of a pack,
Should balance thus each other by their feuds
Concerning God, Heaven, truth, and right itself.
'Twas peace, if peace of ignorance, to fancy
There is one truth for all.

LUCIFER.

Sweet ! would you like
To close your books ?

EVE.

No, for to close them would
Be closing one approach to you. And then
This fruit of knowledge has a bitter sweetness
That gives me taste for more. If but your voice,
Not the dumb page, did always tutor me.
Then 'twould be sweetness only, yet not cloy.
Oft when my head says "yes," my heart says "no,"
Save you be near. Then head and heart alike
Catch but one sound and echo one assent.

LUCIFER.

Count Abdiel has left us.

EVE.

When ? For long ?

LUCIFER.

As long as the experiment provides
Sport for his cynic humour. He has gone
Down to the valley, seeking wedlock's chain :

Chain he will carry loosely. Can you guess
Who she may be, the victim of his mood?

EVE.

It must be Elspeth. But you do not doubt
He will be good to her?

LUCIFER.

He will not kill her ;
At least not all at once, nor wittingly ;
He will not beat her ;—O be sure of that.
Nor will he starve her of material food,
Nor leave her naked to the wind and snow.
She will have meat and raiment, roof and fire,
And all things proper to the dignity
Of her they call Count Abdiel's lawful wife.
But if she love him and he love her not,
Alas ! poor penitent ! her days will be
Hungry, and cold, and homeless, and her nights
More solitary than is sleep. Good? good ! What good
Is goodness unto love that craves for love
And nauseates other food? All best is bad
To love the epicure, unless the meat
Be seasoned by himself.

EVE.

And do you fear

He will desert her ?

LUCIFER.

If desertion need

Abstraction of the body, presence, speech,
Perchance he will be faithful : who can say ?
But there is worse abandonment than that :
The solitary fear, the unshared hope,
The loneliness of anguish. These decree
Unregistered divorce. The double board,
The double bed, may leave life single still.
Only the chemistry of love can make
Two atoms one.

EVE.

Then both, 'twould seem, must love.

LUCIFER.

They must, and equally ; or else, more close
That contact be, more strong repugnancy.
Circles that more than touch must intersect,
Is an old truth ; and true it is of all,

Save those who love. Then, then they interfuse
Into another and a perfect sphere.

EVE.

How can you fuse with me? Is't sure you do,
Or but inhale the incense of my love
As something fragrant?

LUCIFER.

Were that so, I should
Myself but be an altar, cold and deaf,
Decked with the flowers of your idolatry ;
A god indeed, the worst of all the gods,
Devouring my own worshipper. Alas !
Such gods abound. I am not one of them.

EVE.

O surely not ! I did not fear you were.
But your loving me seems strange, unnatural.

LUCIFER.

'Tis nature lets me love you ; artifice
Had stood between us.

EVE.

Have you loved, before ?

LUCIFER.

There are so many counterfeits of love,
One knows them only by assaying them.

EVE.

Then might not this too be a counterfeit?

LUCIFER.

Nay; 'tis true coinage, dear. For Time who robs
Mortality of much, withal secretes
For age some recompense, though not in full.
Just as the owl comes out when sweet birds roost,
So wisdom, moping substitute for song,
Haunts the grave twilight of departed youth.

EVE.

But you,—but you, are wise and young as well,
Sage as the owl, yet soaring as the lark,
My Prince!

LUCIFER.

I am, as long as you do think it.
But wiser, surely, by past counterfeits,
I now love's true from spurious effigy

(K)

At touch distinguish. Question not too much
Of all that was which makes me all I am.
Woman loves best the first time, man the last.
Her love is blossom, but his love is fruit.
Most times, alas ! blossom with blossom mates,
For young and fair by fair and young is drawn,
And both are blown away upon the wind,
Dainty as spring and as ephemeral.
But love that through all seasons is to last,
Must paragon that happy tree which keeps
The mellow fruit among the glistening leaves
Till comes the bloom to join it. Blossom mine,
Content you with my ripeness !

EVE.

O speak on !

There is a freshness in your words mature,
That makes conviction instinct, instinct trust.

LUCIFER.

Then let conviction, trust, and instinct be
The tributary streams to loitering love,
To urge its currents onward till they flow,
Lost in the sea of self-oblivion.

Sweet ! love me to the uttermost of love,
Nor halt, to freeze mid-way !

THE WEISSHORN.

*Snowdrop, and dewdrop,
And harebell of the heather,
Far from your flock,
In the sultry weather ;*

*With the melting snow
Are the torrents laden ;
Melting, slow melting,
Mountain maiden !*

EVE.

O if we could be
Like to the high inviolate stars that keep
Aloof from contact, and for ever shine
As young and virginal as on the night
When first they dawned on space !

LUCIFER.

But, sweet, you know

K

That there are double stars whose motion is
To circle round each other, round and round.

EVE.

Yet do not even these some distance keep,
Lest they should perish of propinquity?
What if it be that love must, starlike, live
On faithful separation!

LUCIFER.

Chilly creed!

Chilly as night itself, which lends no warmth
Though all the stars be shining. See them now,
Burnished battalions of the disciplined sky,
All to their post, all at their silent watch,
To hold the rear of yesterday until
To-morrow bring its reinforcements up
To rout the darkness! . . . You are silent, sweet.

EVE.

True love is silent, like to a fixed star,
And only gazes. Nay, look down, not up!
You will not find me there. I am not cold;
Or if I seem so now, it only is

The snow that comes to take the snow away.

See, it is gone—gone—gone !

LUCIFER.

Come to my heart !

And if there be a nearer place than that,

Come there !

THE MATTERHORN.

*What do they want with each other? Why mingle
they breath with breath?*

*Do they think to elude the feet of Fate, or the slow sure
limp of Death?*

*They tremble and fly to each other's clutch; they tremble,
and rave, and moan.*

*We who know no yearning, nor joy, nor love, we live
and endure alone.*

THE WEISSHORN.

*Nay, pity them not that their breath is brief; it is ill
when the days wax olden.*

*For the leaves they are green and sweet in spring, in
autumn are sweet and golden.*

*'Tis the hollow bole and the wrinkled bark that are
gnawed by the winds of winter,
When the clammy mist clings, and the raven croaks,
and the rotten boughs creak and splinter.*

*All alone at night, 'neath the clear cold stars or the
flakes of the snow descending,
While we wake and watch and no slumber comes to
patience and pain unending,
They drink of a tender deep delight and the rapture they
thirst for slakes them ;
Then they sleep in the folds of each other's love till the
dew of their dreaming wakes them.*

THE MATTERHORN.

*How long do they love? How deep do they dream?
Have their dreams and their love no waking,
When the couch grows chill and the pillow grows cold,
and desire is numb or aching?
As the snowflake clings to the frozen flake, or the moss
to the rind that is rotten,
They cling to the loveless dregs of love, till they moulder
or melt forgotten.*

ACT V

SCENE I

[The Village Street.]

1ST PEASANT. Are you bound on this Pilgrimage?

2D PEASANT. Not I, sooth! Footsore enough, without trudging two leagues out, and two back, trolling litanies, and a day's work wasted.

3D PEASANT. Aye, and to find mildew has made a fresh pilgrimage through one's rye. What work can't mend, praying won't end.

4TH PEASANT. But Father Gabriel says we should pray and work as well.

1ST PEASANT. Prince Lucifer neither prays nor works, and look how he prospers! His Lady of Good Help is his sweetheart, Eve; and they go on pilgrim-

ages together, but not of Father Gabriel's sort. They've been all round the world, I hear say, and they've come back happier than ever.

2D PEASANT. All round's a long way.

3D PEASANT. And a year's a long spell; and it must be a year, come this threshing, since they went. I saw them yesterday on the bridge over the Visp; and the sun seemed to be shining all over the faces of both of them.

4TH PEASANT. Happiness is short, eternity's long; and, when life sets, maybe for them there'll be eternal darkness.

5TH PEASANT. Well, they'll have had their life and their sunshine, and that's more than any of us can say. As for the rest, what is it but guessing? A flagon on the table is worth a tun in the cellar; more so, when you haven't got the key.

2D PEASANT. They seem to be making ready to start.

1ST PEASANT. Women and children, mostly. Praying is medicine to women; they never lose a chance. Church festivals are like fine clothes; they can't resist them. Lord! how tired they'll be before they get back!

3D PEASANT. They wouldn't think it a pilgrimage, if they weren't. But for the pleasure women get out of pain, there would be mighty little of it for them in this world.

5TH PEASANT. Look at the little ones, as eager as bees going to swarm. Both my lasses are among them. If Heaven doesn't hear such voices, then I give up Heaven.

6TH PEASANT. They are happy, anyway. Singing and pilgrimaging are holiday to their young hearts. Singing and pilgrimaging are not like school or sermon; they can't be catechised about them. It's not till they begin to work that life means something; though what it means, it wants a wiser head than mine to say. Is Elspeth going?

1ST PEASANT. Surely. Why shouldn't she? She hasn't much else to do, now her grand husband's away. Does any one know when he's coming back?

2D PEASANT. Rich folks come and go, as it pleases them. Ladyday and Lammas are all one to them. But when he does come, you'll see he'll bring presents for Elspeth in one hand, and in the other offerings for Father Gabriel. He never says no to anything Father Gabriel asks.

3^D PEASANT. But Father Gabriel takes care not to ask too much. You never see Count Abdiel in the Confessional or at the Communion rail. He leaves that to Elspeth, and buys indulgences for himself with new chasubles and dalmatics. Yet one genuflection's more real than a hundred gifts.

1ST PEASANT. Maybe it is; but folks with full hands were always welcome in the sacristy.

SCENE II

[The interior of the Church. FATHER GABRIEL praying before the Altar.]

FATHER GABRIEL.

The tears are streaming down Thy face,
The blood is flowing down Thy side,
The cruel nails are in their place,
Where pale Thou hangest crucified.
Upon Thy brow the Crown of Thorn;
Nor John nor Magdalen is near;
But soldier's gibe and rabble's scorn,
The sponge, the hyssop, and the spear.

My Lord! My God! My Saviour dear!
Abandon not my flock forlorn!
What shall I do if Thou forget
Thy agony, Thy bloody sweat,
Thy swooning in Gethsemane?
O tend them now as, on that morn,
When Thou in Bethlehem wast born,
Thy spotless Mother tended Thee!

SCENE III

[The open space in front of the Church. Women and children standing in groups.]

1ST MATRON. Our Lady of Good Help has sent us a fine day.

2D MATRON. She couldn't do less, when we have donned our best clothes, and her shrine's so far.

3D MATRON. Wast ever there?

4TH MATRON. Aye, once, after my first-born teethed. I thought I was going to lose him. But I carried my ear-rings to the Shrine, and there isn't a tougher lad in all these hills. But it did seem a long stretch, footing it all alone. To-day, with such gay company, 'twill be short enough.

5TH MATRON. The company'll be ourselves, mostly. The men folk won't come; only a few o' the old ones, who'll never get half way.

OLD CRONE. 'Twas always so, since there were men and women. Women must do the praying, or the Saints would have a holiday time of it. When I was young and lush, the men troubled Heaven once a year or so; the rest of the twelvemonth, they paid their devotions to us, and got more quickly answered, maybe. But there were better seasons then.

1ST MATRON. There's where it is! Father Gabriel has promised sunshine and dry weather so often, when we've had nothing but rain and cold straight on, folks have given up asking. They repaired the old font, and bought the new thurible from Lyons, and the barley-straw has threshed out poorer than ever.

2D MATRON. But if the Saints didn't know best, what 'ud be the good of praying? Even the Madonna can't be expected always to say yes.

3D MATRON. Aye, and when She's angry with us, ever since Eve stained herself.

4TH MATRON. But why should we suffer because she enjoys? That's what my man asks.

OLD CRONE. Enjoys now. She'll suffer sharp enough when her bones wax old.

5TH MATRON. Then why can't Heaven wait to punish her, instead of punishing other folks before their time?

6TH MATRON. Sure enough, she has a good time of it here, let what will come after. The Prince doats on her; and now she's a mother, and has nothing to do but coo over her babeling, she may well have no ear for the Trump of Judgment.

1ST MATRON. Well, well, there ought to be a real good Paradise for honest women, some day; for babes are not much comfort down here, nor the fathers of them neither. Work and worry, worry and work! Please the Madonna, it'll be different elsewhere.

2D MATRON. See! here comes Father Gabriel. We must all get into our places; the children in front, and we hindmost. Who'll help with this banner?

OLD CRONE. God speed all! I could have pilgrimaged with the smartest of you once. But no limb so lissom but Time makes a cripple of it!

[The Procession, headed by FATHER GABRIEL, starts on the pilgrimage, singing.]

SCENE IV

PRINCE LUCIFER (*alone among the hills*).

Peak beyond peak, summit to summit leading,
And mortal hopes aspiring, ended never,
Which, like to storms conceived in mountain womb,
But in annihilation find their rest.
Yet there *is* living rest, but only when
The heart alights on home, and perches there
In fixed felicity. . . . My love! my kingdom!
Whilom I left her trifling with her babe,
No queen so happy, save the queen a mother,
And then, by queenship vexed. But she! But I!
We two, we one, containing each the other,
Among the spacious undistracting hills,
Attended by the torrents in our progress,
With thunder and by avalanche acclaimed,
Crowned with our own companionship, Royal pair!
Unit with unit blending! More than that
But breeds division. One is solitude,
Two are society, and three a crowd.
Club mortals by the thousand, then, what chaos!
They, if a servile flock, have many shepherds,

This way and that careering. Where is the crook
Can pen them in one fold? I thought mine could,
And made thought suckle hope. My mountain lamb
Hath but one track, divined by following mine.
The harvest of the world is in love's arms,
Which circle all things; arms so white, so warm,
White as the snow yet melting as the sun,
And kisses like the raindrops of the Spring,
A shower of odours! Paragoned with these,
All Principalities and Powers are nothing,
Even if one could rule them. But a King!
A modern King! the subject of his subjects!
The sorriest sea-churl in a keel that rides
Atop of insurrectionary waves,
Is more a Monarch!

. Look on it, as thus:
What is a Realm? As much as one can rule.
But without harmony no rule can be,
My kingdom and my mind were out of tune;
While my converted shepherdess and I,
High above Superstition's jangling voice,
Make faultless music of our lives. That—that—
Is rule, and realm, and throne enough for me;
And so, withal, I triumph.

SCENE V

[A Chamber in Castle Tourbillon.]

EVE (*singing to her baby*).

*White little hands !
Pink little feet !
Dimpled all over,
Sweet, sweet, sweet !
What dost thou wail for ?
The unknown ? the unseen ?
The ills that are coming,
The joys that have been ?*

*Cling to me closer,
Closer and closer,
Till the pain that is purer
Hath banished the grosser.
Drain, drain at the stream, love,
Thy hunger is freeing,
That was born in a dream, love,
Along with thy being !*

*Little fingers that feel
For their home on my breast ;
Little lips that appeal
For their nurture, their rest !
Why, why dost thou weep, dear ?
Nay, stifle thy cries,
Till the dew of thy sleep, dear,
Lies soft on thine eyes.*

[Enter ELSPETH.]

Elsbeth !

ELSPETH.

Dear Eve ! How glad I am I find you,
And find you thus, your baby at your breast.
Is it great joy ?

EVE.

The greatest of all joys.

ELSPETH.

As great as love ?

EVE.

Yes, greater even than love,
As giving is than taking. Nothing makes

The heart so tender as sweet cruelty.
Loving is rapture, motherhood is pain,
Surpassing pleasure in its poignancy ;
As bitter sweet is sweeter than mere sweet,
For savouring sharper.

ELSPETH.

What a cherub face !
Peaceful as all we dream and hope of Heaven.

EVE.

Think you so, dear ? It has been peevish lately,
As though some maggot fed within the bud
I cannot open. Now it sleeps so still.
It was awake a moment ere you came.

ELSPETH.

Nay, do not rouse it. I have things to tell,
Which, though they sadden me, may gladden you.

EVE.

Those were strange things indeed.

ELSPETH.

And strange they are.

You know the Shrine among the western hills,
Our Lady of Good Help?

EVE.

Yes, know it well,
A place of pilgrimage for simple souls.

ELSPETH.

And simply went they there three days ago,
Matrons and maids, with Father Gabriel,
And I among them, singing litanies,
And chanting sacred hymns, in hope to stay
The deluge from the sky that drowns the fields,
And will not be abated.

EVE.

On that day,
I roamed with Lucifer from nine till noon,
Till by my suckling homeward I was drawn,
And sunshine o'er our heads, as in our hearts,
Accompanied our way. Later, the thunder
Kept rumbling distantly.

ELSPETH.

That was the storm

L

That darkened all our pilgrimage. Eve ! Eve !
I seem to see it still, to hear it still.
We reached the Shrine, footsore and faint, but full
Of holy longings, cheerful, confident,
Fell on our knees, and lifted up our voices,
And praised our Mother of Help, when, lo ! a flash
Ripped up the sky and zigzagged down the air,
And smote our Blessèd Mother on the face,
And hurled Her black and shattered to our feet.
For all had started up, and each one looked
To learn if chance the others were alive.

EVE.

Who, who was killed ?

ELSPETH.

None, dear, except our hopes,
Except our prayers. But there is worse than that.
For Father Gabriel wanders all forlorn,
And no one heeds him now. His trembling hands
Uplift a lonely chalice, and his voice
Prays 'mong the deaf memorials of the dead,
No active ear attending. Agèd crones,
Too old to change, with shuffling footsteps come
Up to the flowerless chancel, but to make

The empty space more vacant. The men jeer,
The women drudge in silence. If they speak,
They do so to contrast their lot with yours,
Envyng your happiness.

EVE.

Poor Father Gabriel !
He was so good to me. . . . Sleep, darling, sleep !
Back into peace again ! 'Tis thus it wails,
Whene'er it wakes. Yes, now it sleeps again.
A gloomy tale ! I wonder what it means.
It stirs a dread confusion in the mind.
Wait ! I will go tell Lucifer, and bring
His understanding to our help.

ELSPETH.

No, do not !
He is so wise, so tranquil in his wisdom,
He frightens me.

EVE.

So did he me at first,
As lambs are frightened when the shepherd weans
Their habit from the dugs that have run dry,
Bleating all day. But now I graze in peace

In pastures of his finding. Let me go
And tell him your strange news ; he, he will clear
Our hearts from terror, with the very tale
That now appals us.

ELSPETH.

You, his pupil, dear,
Be you my tutor. You are nearer to me.
He is so far off, I should lose his voice,
Straining to catch it.

EVE.

When you doubt or fear,
Does not Count Abdiel help you ?

ELSPETH.

With a smile,
That helps me not, but only makes me feel
I am too weak for strength to strengthen me.
He bids me pray, himself neglecting prayer,
And says 'tis best so.

EVE.

Are you happy, thus ?

ELSPETH.

Am I not married, and what other joy
Hath life for womenkind?

EVE.

The joy *I* have!
The joy of love's fast covenant.

ELSPETH.

How is that fast
Which either he or you can break at will?

EVE.

That alone breaks which doubting ties too tight.
When does Count Abdiel return? And why
Do you not cheer his journey?

ELSPETH.

Should I cheer it?
My halting understanding seems a clog
On his enjoyment.

EVE.

That should not be so.
Love leaps to its conclusions, leaving out

The intermediate reasons, and I see
Whatever Lucifer sees, feel what he feels,
Rejoice in whatso joy rejoiceth him.

ELSPETH.

You love each other.

[She kneels at EVE's side.]

If I had a babe,
Just such an one as this, it might breed love ;
If not, I then could live in my content,
Spending my heart and wanting no return,
As you ask none from this poor infancy.

EVE.

Nay, you are loved, be sure. You are made for love ;
You are so fair.

ELSPETH.

It seemed so once ; but now,
I were no worse, being foul.

EVE.

But, child, there are
So many ways of loving.

ELSPETH.

Child, yourself!

If you think that. No! no! there is but one;
You know it, too; you speak to comfort me.
Love is the sum of all desires; withhold
But one ingredient from expectancy,
How poor and flat and tasteless is the draught!
It is the volume of man's love that sways
Our passive inclinations, and he rules
Supreme o'er our submission only when
Anon his tenderness to fierceness flows,
And then his fierceness ebbs to tenderness;
Tide of contented but eternal longing.

EVE.

My heart says "Yes" to that, but it is sad
You know so much.

ELSPETH.

Having so little!

EVE.

Hark!

How loud it thunders!

ELSPETH.

Thunders as it did,
Just ere the Statue fell.

EVE.

Oh! What a flash!

[She covers up her babe.]

It played about his head.

ELSPETH.

I must be gone
Before the storm breaks.

EVE.

Wait till it hath passed.

ELSPETH.

It will not pass. The Heavens, incensed afresh,
Shower vengeance copiously. Rain, rain! more rain!
Poor Father Gabriel!

EVE.

See, dear! Take him these

[She gives ELSPETH the flowers that are in the room.]

And say Eve sent them; Eve who loves him always,

And fain would comfort him. And tell him, too,
I gathered them, myself.

ELSPETH (*bending over the child*).

One parting kiss!

I will not wake it. There!

EVE.

Come soon again,

And tell me all. Yes, mind you tell me all;

And—well, no more: I go to Lucifer.

You will not stay? Make haste then, for the storm
Is nigh to bursting.

ELSPETH.

'Tis a quick descent.

Be happy, sweet. But what a wasteful wish!

For happiness lies anchored in your lap.

[ELSPETH departs, and EVE goes to seek PRINCE LUCIFER.]

THE MATTERHORN.

*How like they are to the flowers that grow on my
rugged breast!*

*They will not bloom in the glare or the snow of my
soaring crest.*

*They need the dew of the cool dusk night and the warm
soft rain,*

*And open mid-way betwixt deep delight and the peaks
of pain.*

*About them floateth a longing faint, and a perfume
frail,*

*And their uttermost joy is but half-restraint, and a
stifled wail.*

*Man comes and idly he gathereth flowers, and gathereth
these,*

*And soon they are joined with the bygone hours, with
the bygone breeze.*

*He sees and plucks them, and savours awhile, then he
flings away,*

*And forgets their freshness, their fragrance, their smile,
till death's dark day.*

*Then they, they revive for their fierce false lover, and
close his eyes,*

*And over him tenderly linger and hover, as he dies, as
he dies.*

*O would that there were, when the tempest flags and its
tumults cease,*

*A cradle somewhere among my crags, to rock her to
peace.*

*Where awaking she heard the cattle low and the sheep-
bells peal,*

*And lulled in my lap might feel and know what I know
and feel.*

*But she never can fathom nor span it, she never will
know ;*

*She will weep, and but think that my heart is granite,
my head is snow.*

SCENE VI

[The Terrace of Castle Tourbillon.]

EVE.

How slow along the dial creep the hands !
Think you they soon will come ?

LUCIFER.

They should be here.
Shall I go meet them, urging speedier speed ?

EVE.

Leave me not, love ! I would not be alone.
Tell me again : are they renowned for skill ?

LUCIFER.

More skilful could not be. No greater names
Practise the healing or the saving art.

EVE.

And they *will* save it ?

LUCIFER.

Be convinced of that.
Another hour at most, your fears will fade,
As fades yon sunset light.

EVE.

I am so grieved
For Father Gabriel. But it was not we
Who marred his pilgrimage ? I cannot put
The recollection from me.

LUCIFER.

If we strove
To prove, as he doth, Heaven is on our side,

How aptly Nature's careless sacrilege
Would serve for such a sermon !

EVE.

Might he not
Plead, as he used to plead, that Heaven is wroth ?

LUCIFER.

With whom? With what it smites? With what it spares?
If thunderstorms are angry, mostly, dear,
They vex themselves in vain. Grant them a mind,
Their conscious fury should have winged a bolt
Straight at the towers of Castle Tourbillon,
Not at that blameless Shrine.

EVE.

Perhaps they wait,
Looking their thought before they utter it.
Who knows ?

LUCIFER.

Then let us deem not that we know,
Fooling the very question that we ask.
Gods that could angered be were scarcely gods.
If they exist, or Many or One, our ways

Are but the darker shadows of their will,
If will they have, or only, like ourselves,
Follow some Past, which, though we call it gone,
Acts as a dragging force upon the Present.

EVE.

If they exist? And if they have a will?
This May-be or May-not-be makes my heart
Ask questions of my head it does not answer.
I can remember Father Gabriel say,
Who doubt in life believe before they die,
Because within the sky light lingereth still,
Though Earth be darkened. . . . See! If you should die,
How could I ever then submit to death,
And own him as my lord? Love would not take
The final answer from his surly lips,
But shape its own reply.

LUCIFER.

I am alive ;
And while I live, concern you not with death.

EVE.

But *if* you died? Or if my babe should die?

This life, that you have made a palace to me,
Were but a——

LUCIFER.

Hark !

EVE.

Yes ! yes ! they come ! they come !
Was I impatient ? Then forgive me ; for
You run before my wishes.

LUCIFER.

One kiss more !

O, you are sweet as is the honeysuckle,
Fragrant and clinging ! Clasp me closer still,
Nor ever let me know the woe 'twould be
To want such sweetness !

SCENE VII

[The Churchyard in the Village. ADAM is looking at an open grave. FATHER GABRIEL comes out of his house.]

FATHER GABRIEL.

Dig no more graves within the churchyard, Adam.
Their unbelieving corpses shall not taint

Its fragrant faithfulness. Let obscene kite,
The carrion kestrel, or the slouching wolf,
Batten upon their dregs, and cram its maw
With soulless offal ! Dig you no more graves.

ADAM.

This one was opened ere you closed the Church :
An uncommissioned grave. 'Twas habit, Father,
That made me delve it. When all else is slack,
My shovel finds me custom, and my stock
Runs out at length ; for graves, though ready made,
Will fit us all as if first measured for them.
This is a pretty and a shapely grave.

FATHER GABRIEL.

No one shall fill it. I have stripped the altar,
Made of the sacristy a lumber chamber.
The candles are unlighted, and the lamp
Within the sanctuary stares as blank
As this unlesed sepulchre. Leave it so,
This gaping tomb, as you have fashioned it,
This open door through which they shall not pass
Till they have staunched the wounds of Christ, and
grovelled
Before the heavenly sorrow of their guilt.

ADAM.

Their thoughts have left repentance, and devise
An earthly reparation for the wrong.
Fancying Prince Lucifer secretes the wealth
That would redress their poverty, they plan
How to unearth it.

FATHER GABRIEL.

Let them meet and shock,
With Heaven no more between them to assuage
The fury of their unregenerate wills.
Let them take all he has,—his wealth, his wanton,
And let him learn how men and women fare,
Bare of the shield of God! And mind you, Adam!
Hollow you graves on the cold mountain side,
Among the stony bowels of the rock,
Or in the shingle of the foul moraine;
Not here, not here, I say. Why, any cur
Can foul an altar; but the dog's a dog,
Not God reversed by its impiety.
No new graves, and no flowers for the old,
And still no occupant for this which yawns.
You mark me, Adam?

M

ADAM.

Yes, I mark you, Father,
And will obey. There shall be no more graves.

[FATHER GABRIEL goes back into his house.]

ADAM (*alone*).

His heart is hard against them, theirs 'gainst him.
Yet is it wise in this brief life to be
So disputatious, seeing that we all
Agree in death? And though he loudly claims
To carry this contention to the seat
Of further judgment, can I doubt that Heaven
Will bid our feud join hands? . . . Pity, this grave,
Commodiously fashioned, should stand vacant.
Well, 'tis a dwelling that costs no repair,
Remaining roofless till it gets a tenant,
Whom it can wait for unconcernedly.

SCENE VIII

[The Village Street. Peasants standing in the rain.]

1ST PEASANT. There must be treasure somewhere;
somewhere, I say.

2D PEASANT. Aye, but where?

3D PEASANT. *He* can tell us that.

4TH PEASANT. But if he won't?

1ST PEASANT. He can be made to tell.

5TH PEASANT. Princes are not easily made to do anything they don't want to, I've heard say.

3D PEASANT. That depends on how hard folks that are not princes try to make them.

2D PEASANT. I don't believe he has got any treasure.

1ST PEASANT. Listen to him! A nest without any feathers in it, when feathers are plenty!

6TH PEASANT. He gave up the Crown, meaning to have it back again on his own terms. But meanwhile, think you he starves or lives lean?

1ST PEASANT. His servitors are fat enough.

2D PEASANT. Not too fat to stand by him, if the Castle's attacked.

5TH PEASANT. He won't ask us to take it, that's pretty sure.

2D PEASANT. Or give it up without a struggle.

1ST PEASANT. People who climb must expect boulders. It's all a question who's strongest in this world; a world about which the other world,

if there be one, doesn't seem to trouble itself much.

2D PEASANT. But isn't theft theft, whether you steal secretly or openly, with cunning or with violence?

1ST PEASANT. Who stole first? And isn't it theft, whether you steal with your fingers or with your sword? I never heard of a king coming by a throne by working; and everything's theft save working; and working's no longer any good. Only let us steal back the wealth he or his stole from our sort, and then we shall be able to work again to some profit. See here, too! hasn't he taken the fairest of our flock, and what has he given us for her?

2D PEASANT. He has made her happy, they say.

4TH PEASANT. Then let us be made happy too. He doesn't believe in Heaven, and we don't believe in it either. Then let's have fair play on earth.

ALL. Aye, that's it.

1ST PEASANT. It's all very well to struggle and starve, to work harder than a mule and feed no better, if it's going to be put to rights in another life. But if there's only one life, it's poor work being miserable in it, when princes and fine folk lie soft and eat daintily. Let's have the treasure, I say; at any rate, let's try.

If it isn't here, maybe it's elsewhere ; and he'll send for it, if once he finds it'll be worse for him if he doesn't.

4TH PEASANT. Then, we can take Eve from him, if that's all, and hold her as a ransom till he sees things as we do.

2D PEASANT. But we mustn't hurt her, though.

1ST PEASANT. Who wants to hurt her? Women-kind are not answerable for themselves, let alone for others. Never fear for her, nor for him either, if he'll only hear reason.

7TH PEASANT. Yes, he who, from all I hear say, has such a lot of reason. He wanted to make his people free. Then let him begin with us. We've no objection to have the church doors shut, provided the granary doors are opened.

2D PEASANT. Father Gabriel has shut the church-yard as well, and told Adam to dig no more graves there. He won't bury us, he says.

1ST PEASANT. Not much odds whether he does or not, I warrant, so he doesn't prevent us from keeping ourselves alive.

4TH PEASANT. And when we do die I reckon graves'll cost less, the less fuss one makes over them.

1ST PEASANT. Are we of one mind then? To try soft words first; and, if soft words are no good, then strong action?

GROUP OF PEASANTS. Yes, that's what we wish.

1ST PEASANT. But mind! not a whisper to the women. They talk shrewishly enough; but when it comes to doing, then straight they begin limping. But when we give them comfort and fine clothes, they won't be so curious as to where these came from.

[They disperse.]

SCENE IX

[PRINCE LUCIFER'S Study.]

LUCIFER (*alone ; reading a dispatch*).

At length I triumph! Were I there, to take
Assent and homage from their very lips,
I could not have assurance more than this.
Thus Abdiel writes: "Your People all consent,
Now not alone that Love shall bondless be,
Save as it binds itself, but altar, priest,
All superstitious sanctions of man's life,
Which needs no sanction save his sovereign will,

Shall henceforth be abolished and annulled.
And they entreat You to return and rule
An Empire by your lofty wisdom freed
From every link and note of servitude."

[He paces the room.]

Yes! I must go, go there without delay,
Though my coy shepherdess will sore be scared
By her new flock. As yet, her throne hath been
Only the modest station of my heart.
The magnitude of homage will affright her,
As she was frightened when I found her first
And mixed love's magic philtre for her fears.
Love can do all things, change a mountain peasant
Unto a Queen apparent, fit a Crown
Unto the lowliest forehead. Once conceived
With passionate hope, but long from thought dismissed
As barren expectation, my Ideal
Lives real and actual! My Realm sloughs off
The coil of centuries, and hails me King,
Not by the grace of a fantastic Heaven,
Nor for my robed servility, but lo!
By virtue of my Light! That is a Throne
A Man may deign to sit on, and a sceptre
Worthy imperial grasp. Straight will we go,

I and my wilding Flower of the hills,
And reign in freedom over a free People,
Summit and symbol of their liberty.
Earth! what a triumph over vaporous Heaven!

[EVE enters the chamber.]

EVE.

O, let me light the lamp!

LUCIFER.

What lamp, my child?

EVE.

The lamp we kindled when I came here first,
And we have left unkindled, O too long!
Have you forgotten?

LUCIFER.

I remember well,
For I have treasured every touch, and tone,
Token and trifle, of your gentle heart.
But since that time,—well, you are wiser now,
And purer light my love hath tendered you.

EVE.

O, what is light? what, wisdom? I am torn
With doubt of doubt. Tell me you love me still.

LUCIFER.

The brimming ocean, sweet, is not more full
Of the deep waves than I am of our love.
There is no room in me for more than thou.
Thou fillest my capacity.

EVE.

Let me then
Kindle the lamp anew.

LUCIFER.

Wherefore, my child?
Your will is sweet to me, and have your will.
But if you have a reason for your will,
Will you not tell it me?

EVE.

You are not angry?
I am a woman; yours—yours still—but weak,
Because I am a woman, and I want
To save its life.

LUCIFER.

That—that—the leeches will,
Be sure of it.

EVE.

Themselves, they are not sure.
I read misgiving in their looks, I catch
Foreboding in their grave and faltering tones.
She, She perhaps can save it. Nay, who knows?
You say we move in darkness; all is dark.
Why then not try? It cannot do us hurt,
And if it save my darling!

LUCIFER.

Love, your mind
Is misty with distress. Trust *me*; trust *them*!
Their skill is paramount.

EVE.

Not against death!

LUCIFER.

What is? We can but parry him awhile,
So long as he is pleased to trifle with us.

But all at last behold his cold point creep
Over their guard, and break down their defence.

EVE.

I would not lose your love, for life, for death,
For earth, for Heaven, for boundless everything.
But if you love me as I love you, love,
Let us try every stroke and possible thrust
To push death farther off! Yes, all must die ;
But not so soon. It came but yesterday,
And all the currents of my life are flush
To keep it living. Must the stream be dried
Whose source is flowing still? The lamp! the lamp!
Light the lamp, Lucifer! Too long, too long,
Her presence hath been darkened. Look! how sad,
How tranquil yet how sad, She droops Her eyes,
As though She waited ; and Her empty arms
Are stretched in heavenly patience !

LUCIFER.

Think, child, think !
If you do that which you conceive to do,
You straight will slip down at a single stride
All the ascent you have made !

EVE.

No, no ! not all !

I still shall be with you, my height ! my heaven !
And you are high enough for both. So long
As, fondly thus, I hang upon your neck,
I cannot fall so low ! Let us but try !
What if it died, and I omitted this—
This chance to save it ! What should I think then ?
I more than ever should connect my hopes
With Heaven and prayer, because the hope was gone
That hung on mortal help. There's oil in the lamp :
It only needs rekindling. . . . Lucifer !

LUCIFER.

O what a choice you leave me ! If you pray,
And seem to pray in vain, the babe must die,
And you be desolate ; and if it live,
Then will you knit your happiness to prayer,
And I shall lose the consort of my mind,
And once more think—alone ! Will you not wait,
Wait just a little, dear ?

[A servitor enters, speaks low to the Prince, and goes.]

EVE.

What did he say ?

LUCIFER.

The babe is worse.

EVE.

Give me the taper, quick !

[PRINCE LUCIFER lights the taper, hands it to EVE, who lights the lamp before the image of the Madonna, and falls on her knees.]

My Mother ! hear me !

SCENE X

[The Study of PRINCE LUCIFER. Night. He stands at the open window, gazing at the sky.]

LUCIFER (*alone*).

What an opprobrium is sleep, that robs
Poor life of half its value ! Covert thief,
That art the accessory before the event
To all-defrauding death ! To-night I sleep not,
But once again with questioning wonder scan
The unsundering silence of the stars.
Eve, too, is wakeful, bending o'er the babe,
Or kneeling by the semblance of the Mother,
With downcast eyes and folded suppliant hands.

Is it in vain, then, that the eagle mind
Full on the light of things unblinking stares?
Its gaze, its eyrie, are for it alone ;
Or if to that vague altitude it lifts
The innocents of the vale, they come as victims.

[He turns, and slowly paces the chamber.]

Yet, yet what strength within their weakness lurks,
To prove, at pinch, the weakness of our strength !
She begs and weeps ; and, undermined by Love,
See Reason's fortress blown into the air
By my own fuse !

[EVE rushes in.]

EVE.

She will not hear me pray.
My lamb is worse. You must go seek the shepherd.

LUCIFER.

Be calm, my child, nor wail yourself in space,
That hath nor ear nor bowels for your grief,
A deaf for endless void. If you must pray,
Petition *me* ; be sure that I will listen.

EVE.

Then send for Father Gabriel !

LUCIFER.

What can he?

He hath nor craft nor medicine, and 'tis certain,
Who will not hear you, sweet, would not hear him.

EVE.

O, but my woe is weighted with my sin,
And cannot rise to Heaven. His voice is pure,
And so will pierce the ether. Send for him!
My breasts are poisoned, and my milk is drugged
With deadly doubt. I—I, in suckling it
Am but its murderer. My noxious womb
Gave it the venom that is withering it.
How should She hear me, me who heard Her not,
Until I needed Her! I need Her now.
Send, send for Father Gabriel! beg him come!
You said that you would hear me if I prayed,
And this—this—this—this is my prayer—my prayer!
My love! my Lucifer! my morning star!
Be, as you've told me, evening star as well!
And you, the glittering jewel of my dawn,
Illumine this my twilight, and prevent
The pall of utter darkness!

LUCIFER.

'Tis deep night.

Will you not wait till morning?

EVE.

Wait! when its life
Hangs on the fragile seconds! At once! At once!
Whom shall we send?

LUCIFER.

Myself will go for him.

EVE.

I knew you would! Then, then, you love me still!
Is the night very dark? Let me go with you.
I know the track so well.

LUCIFER.

And well I know it.
Stay by the cradle.

EVE.

How you bear with me!
And never think I do not love you best,

You first, you last. But you, you are so strong,
It is so weak ;—as I am ! See ! a kiss
To speed my Prince. Another I refuse,
To lure him swiftly back.

[EVE returns to the Child.]

LUCIFER (*alone*).

Some deeds there are,
Best done in darkness, without company :
And such a deed is this I now must do.
Farewell, my lofty visions ! I descend,
A mountain mendicant, to sue the vale
For alms to brand me beggar for my life.
Life ! that uneasy dream from which we wake,
To find it nothing !

[He hurries down the mountain.]

THE WEISSHORN.

*Roaring, rolling, hear the torrents rolling, roaring,
Roaring, racing, each with each ;
Foaming forward, and imploring
For the rest they cannot reach.*

THE VISP-THAL TORRENT.

*Straining, striving, see the mountains striving,
 straining,
 Straining highward and more high !
Yearning upward, but ne'er gaining
 On the still receding sky.*

THE WEISSHORN.

*Growling, rumbling, hear the thunders rumbling,
 growling,
 Growling with the lust to slay ;
'Mong the clefts and gorges prowling,
 But still finding not their prey.*

THE VISP-THAL TORRENT.

*Mortals, mortals, watch poor vain deluded mortals,
 Dreaming of the dim divine ;
Waiting still at tight-closed portals,
 Locked out from an empty shrine !*

THE MATTERHORN.

*Dwarf Man ! that would plummet
 The deep to its fountains,*

*And soar past the summit
Of mists and of mountains ;*

*Behold what avail your
Strain and endeavour !
Effort and failure,
For ever and ever !*

END OF ACT V

ACT VI

SCENE I

Outside Castle Tourbillon.

[A body of Peasants, armed with flint-guns, scythes, and billhooks, are collected on the hillside.]

1ST PEASANT. Are we ready, then?

ALL. Ready enough, when you give the word.

1ST PEASANT. I will speak him fair at first, and if he hears reason, reasonable we too must hold ourselves. But if he answers smooth with rough, then we must see who can be roughest.

2D PEASANT. But not rough with Eve, master.

1ST PEASANT. Not rough, surely, but not soft, neither. If he's for giving up the treasure, let him keep the rest. But if he's got no ear for the rumbling

of emptying bellies,—well, we must put a sharper edge on his own fine appetite. Forward, now!

[They advance towards the main entrance of the Castle. Just before they reach it, the Castle gates open slowly, and through them comes FATHER GABRIEL, attired in his priestly robes, followed by four acolytes carrying a small coffin covered with flowers. Behind it walk PRINCE LUCIFER and EVE, EVE dressed in white. After them the servitors of the Castle, unarmed.]

LUCIFER.

What want you, friends?

1ST PEASANT.

We came to speak with you.

LUCIFER.

Speak, then.

[They remain silent.]

You all are silent; but no need
Is there to put your weapons into words.
In what have I offended?

1ST PEASANT.

Our intent
Was to petition you to share your wealth
With needy brethren; but,—not here—not now!

LUCIFER.

Nay, you have come most timely. Share it, sooth !
For in that coffin it lies. Wrest it from death,
And make me rich again ! My other treasure,
My other and my greater, look on her !
If you can share her grief, you share my wealth,
For other have I none. What else I have lost,
Well, if you knew, you would not grudge it me.
Pray, go within, and take thence what you will.
For there is nothing in it that I value,
Saving some empty memories, and those
Would not enrich you.

FATHER GABRIEL.

Dear my sons !

Lay your rebellious weapons on the ground,
And tread with melancholy feet the track
Pointed by Heaven ! When God speaks through
Death,
Life then is forced to hear. That messenger
Reveals the supreme Potentate that sends him.
Follow the coffin.

[The Peasants lay down their weapons, and follow the Funeral
Procession till it reaches the village. There, joined by

the other villagers, it passes through the churchyard, where ADAM is standing by the empty grave, into the Church. The coffin is placed in the nave ; and FATHER GABRIEL, advancing to the chancel, followed by EVE and PRINCE LUCIFER, marries them in presence of his flock. The coffin is then brought to the altar-rails.]

Marriage and Burial :—these are twin.
Both Love and Death are born of Sin ;
And God is justified therein.

Man soweth ill, God reapeth good,
Reapeth His harvest when He would,
Is wisest when least understood.

The Flower that lies beneath these flowers,
Its task done in this world of ours,
Is gathered to the Triune Powers.

It was a love-gift timely sent :
It was not given, 'twas only lent,
As God's indulgent instrument.

The eyes of Faith are never dim :
It is not dead, it lives with Him ;
It knows what know the Seraphim.

Unto the dust though I commit
Its mortal semblance, as is fit,
The Cherubim have charge of it.

EVE (*to* LUCIFER).

I will stay here, and pray. Go, you!

[All, except EVE, pass into the churchyard, where FATHER GABRIEL recites the Funeral Service. That over, all disperse, excepting PRINCE LUCIFER and ADAM.]

LUCIFER.

That road did lead to death, and then to marriage.

ADAM.

A man may be a prophet without knowing it.
And, maybe, exhalations from the grave
Have inspiration in them. Look you, sir!
Is't not as shapely as I promised it?
No sheets could be more smooth. And you must put
Some pretty marble over it, and words
As touching as its mother.

LUCIFER.

That, she will.

Lord! What a world of luggage we do take
On a short journey at the end whereof

We shall need none. The Gods themselves provide
A change for all, when this soiled trudge is o'er.

[He enters the Church, where EVE is still praying. He
touches her on the shoulder.]

Come, child, come !

SCENE II

[The Mountain-side near Castle Tourbillon.]

EVE.

I am a little tired.

LUCIFER.

Lean on me, dear.

We will turn homeward.

EVE.

If you love me less,

You veil it nobly.

LUCIFER.

Less I do not love you :

And wherefore should I ?

EVE.

I have awoke your dream,
The dream that was to you reality ;

And you have nothing now but my poor love,
Which seems so little, severed from your dream.
I wish that I could help it for your sake ;
But Heaven has got a hostage for my faith,
And I with Heaven perforce must keep my pledge,
Or forfeit hope to see my babe again.
Tell me you do not love me less ?

LUCIFER.

I do not.

You never can take back the gift you gave,
Or I repay the giver ; and, if wed
To soothe a later longing, I forget not,
And you must never ask me to forget,
You loved me, still unwedded.

EVE.

Then remember.

The violet, though rifled by the wind,
Doth keep some fragrance in it ; and I still,
Despite of that I have surrendered, may
Perfume your life a little. Is it so ?

LUCIFER.

'Twas the surrender made you sweet ; as flowers

Are scentless till the chilly morning dew
Is shaken off them, though without the dew
'Tis true they never had been sweet at all.
And only let the secret night employ
Its mystic power upon them, lo ! afresh
The dew returns and trembles in their heart.

EVE.

O yes, I know my heart will fresh remain,
If Love can keep it so. It is my mind,
My faltering mind, that makes me fearful lest
You get too distant as I drop behind.

LUCIFER.

There was a time I thought that as the snow
High on the mountain's wintry brow must melt
Before the vernal torrents leap and sing,
So must the icy summits of the mind
Feed the glad streams with which Love fills the heart.
Look on me now ! look well ! And if you meet
A gaze less near and tender than of old,
Then look on it no more !

EVE.

My Prince ! my husband !

But though I love you more than love e'er loved
That has no sorrow in it, tell me, tell me,
Is it not pain to you that I can be
The perfect shadow of your thought no more?

LUCIFER.

Pain, yes, at first it was. But as you see
Low-lying mists drawn by the sovran sun
To topmost regions of the air, and so
Melted to ether, the effulgent mind
Can call up sorrow to its own great height,
And dissipate it there!

EVE.

Have you no news
From the great Realm I lost you?

LUCIFER.

News, to-day.
They have proclaimed Count Abdiel King.

EVE.

And he?

LUCIFER.

Accepts their homage gravely. I outrun
Your eager thought; for true it is that he

Secretly mocks the Creed they have proclaimed,
As openly he mocked it, preached by me.

EVE.

But should they change their mood ?

LUCIFER.

He will change his
More nimbly e'en than they ; being, sooth, in that,
A very model Ruler for To-day,
Whose fetich, if you peel it to the core,
Public opinion, is no more than this,
What people think that other people think.

EVE.

Love fails me here. I do not understand.

LUCIFER.

'Tis not worth understanding. Kiss me, sweet.
Who loves knows all. The rest is ignorance,
Pretentiously tricked out, mere strutting sound
And noisy nothingness.

EVE.

I love your thoughts,
E'en when I cannot follow them, as we love

To gaze on distances we may not reach.
But, O, be sure, I do not love you less,
But more, whene'er I pray.

LUCIFER.

Then, pray, pray on ;
And on love's neutral territory, dear,
Let conflict be suspended.

EVE.

Strange that you,
You, of all soaring minds, should never feel
A self within yourself above yourself,
Like stars within the hollow of the sky,
Prompting a yearning infinite.

LUCIFER.

I feel it.
For every note our finite music strikes
Awakes kin note within the Infinite,
Heard distantly.

EVE.

May this not be
A mother's answer to an infant's cry ?

And though we cannot see the far-off face,
Is not the voice responsive present proof
'Tis hiding somewhere ?

LUCIFER.

Sweetly thought and said.

It may be.

EVE.

But will Elspeth not rejoin
Count Abdiel in his kingdom ?

LUCIFER.

You forget.

He erstwhile married her, and thus no place,
She can accept, awaits her in his Realm.
She, like the moon, must take her way alone,
Wearing the pale light of an absent lord.

EVE.

O what a depth of difference doth divide
Short-memored lust and long-remembering love !
How can he leave her lonely to support
A double recollection ?

LUCIFER.

'Tis that he
Is cynical as common sense can make him,
And, worldly-wise, is no Idealist.

EVE.

As is my Lucifer. O be one always !
For if you saw me actual, I should fade
Into a simple shepherdess.

LUCIFER.

'Tis well
To see all things in heavenly fantasy :
Ourselves, and others, even as we scan
The inaccessible bright stars, and deem
Their silence music ; so that nothing gross
Can reach the elevation of our thoughts,
Wherein we dwell transfigured !

EVE.

O, that voice !

Lucifer ! Lucifer ! that dulcet voice
Is incantation o'er me, and I feel
That you are wizarding my soul away

Into the skies of dreaming. Lucifer!
Who once has doubted never quite believes.

LUCIFER.

Who once believed will never wholly doubt.

SCENE III

[The interior of the Village Church.]

FATHER GABRIEL.

Now to God the Father, to God the Son, and to
God the Holy Ghost, be praise, glory, and thanks-
giving, now and for evermore. Amen.

THE END

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